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THE

THEORY OF MORALS

BY

PAUL JANET

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AUTHOR OF "FINAL CAUSES," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST FRENCH EDITION

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PREFACE.

IN my *Elements of Morals*, published some years ago [1869], I sought to present such of the clearest and most useful results of moral science as would be accessible to all minds, especially those of the young. I avoided all delicate discussions and too abstruse researches. In the volume which I now publish, and which has only a few pages in common with the other, I have, on the contrary, endeavored to go back to first principles, and to define, with some precision, the fundamental ideas of morals; finally, to present a systematic and well-connected exposition of them; not forgetting, however, the wise precept of Aristotle, that one should expect from any science only that degree of exactness of which it is capable.

While I have not neglected to consult my predecessors,[1] and to draw inspiration from their researches, I have done every thing in my power to add something to them. I believe that I have introduced, or brought back, into the science, some elements which have been too much neglected; that I have elucidated some difficulties; offered some solutions and suggested some subjects for investigation. I do not think that I have done every thing that can be done, but I believe that I have done my best.

[1] Not to mention too many names, I will refer merely to the celebrated work *Du Devoir* by M. Jules Simon; *La Science Morale* by M. Renouvier; *La Philosophie du Devoir* by M. Ferraz; *La Morale pour tous* by M. Ad. Franck; *La Morale Indépendante* by Mme. C. Coignet; *Principes de la Morale considérés comme Science* by M. E. Wiart; *La Morale Psychologique* by M. Herrenschneider (*C. rendus de l'Ac. des sc. mor. et pol.*, 1871).

The development of my principles, and the arguments supporting them, will be found in the succeeding chapters; but it seemed to me well to collect them first in a sort of anticipatory synthesis, so that those who have read the book might see their unity, and those who are about to read it might more readily perceive this. Still, I demand that judgment should not be passed upon bare formulas, but should be suspended until they are explained by development or discussion.

My fundamental principle is, that *moral good* presupposes a *natural good* which is anterior to it, and serves as its foundation.

If all the objects of our actions were *indifferent* in themselves, as the Stoics claim, it would be impossible to understand why we should be under obligation to seek for one rather than for another, and the moral law would be void of all content.

These *natural goods*, anterior to moral good, and which are to become the objects of choice, are not to be estimated according to the *pleasure* which they procure for us, but according to an intrinsic character, which I call their *excellence*, and which is independent of our way of feeling.

It was from this point of view that the ancients very justly divided *goods* into three classes — *exterior* goods, *corporeal* goods, and the goods of the *soul* — and that they regarded the goods of the soul as superior to those of the body, and the latter as superior to external goods.

The most excellent thing in man is, then, the excellence of his soul, of the highest and best part of his nature — his personality; that is, his reasonable will.

But the excellence of personality does not consist merely in itself: it consists also in its union with the personality of other men — that is to say, in fraternity — and also in its devotion to impersonal goods, such as the beautiful, the true, and the holy.

This ideal excellence of the human person is what is called perfection, and we may say with Wolf that good is perfection.

But, though I make a distinction between good and pleasure, it does not follow that pleasure is not a good. For I admit with

Aristotle, that pleasure is inseparable from action, that the noblest action gives the noblest pleasure, and that perfection is in itself a source of happiness. It is in this sense that I would say with Aristotle, Malebranche, Leibnitz, etc., that good is *happiness*.

A good for man must be his own good: the Utilitarians saw this clearly. It would be a contradiction that any being should be under obligation to pursue an end contrary to his nature. All laws have for their object the advantage of the subjects to whom they are laws. Could moral law alone be a detriment to those whom it commands? It is impossible to admit this. In such a case it would be a law of tyranny, not of justice and of love.

Thus good is also happiness. But happiness is not what Bentham would make it — a calculation, a choice, a combination of pleasures. It is the highest joy, the purest pleasure, adequate to the highest excellence.

The doctrine of *perfection*, and the doctrine of *happiness*, which are at base identical, do not exclude the doctrine of *duty*. Duty is the law which requires us to strive for our own perfection — that is to say, our true happiness.

As there is a true happiness and a false one — the former resulting from the excellence of our nature, the latter from our satisfied sensibility — it is clear that there may be an *obligation* to seek for that which is true, and sacrifice that which is false. This is what all moralists mean by contrasting *true* and *false goods*, and advising men to strive for the first, and not the second.

As man naturally desires good, one part of his nature desires true good, and the other desires also the appearance of good. Now, the will which desires the true good *commands* the will which desires apparent good: this command is moral obligation. Thus I admit with Kant the *autonomy of the will*, as the legislative principle of morality.

Although the law is obligatory in itself, it is so *for us* only in so far as we know it, and to the extent to which we know it. Thus I accept this principle of Fichte's morality: "Obey that conviction of your duty which you actually have." In other words, *Obey*

your conscience. But this rule implies as a postulate, that each one shall do his utmost to bring his actual conscience into the state of an absolute conscience, which would be identical with the law itself.

Since natural and essential good is the basis of duty, I admit with Kant that moral good is, on the contrary, its consequence. This justifies the double proposition, Duty consists in doing good: Good consists in doing one's duty. In other words, duty consists in striving after that which is naturally good; and an action which is morally good is the one which is performed for the sake of duty.

In my opinion, as in that of Kant, the domains of good and of duty are absolutely equivalent. I agree with him, that to desire to rise above duty is *moral fanaticism*. But this liberty which I deny as existing beyond the moral law, I find within the limits of the law itself; and I admit the existence of a *moral initiative*, which cannot change the law in any way, but which constantly creates and modifies the means of fulfilling it.

In accordance with these principles, I reject the received distinction between *definite* and *indefinite* duties. In my opinion, no duty can be indefinite in the sense that one may fulfil it or not according as he pleases. Thus every duty is definite as to its *form;* but, in their application, duties are *definite* or *indefinite* according to the objects which compose their *subject-matter*.

From what has already been said, it will be seen that I do not agree with Kant that virtue is merely the *force of resolution*. It is more than that; and Aristotle was correct in saying that "the virtuous man is he *who finds pleasure* in performing virtuous acts."

By means of virtue man acquires a certain value, in addition to that which he had received from nature. We say, then, that he has *merit*. Merit is, therefore, the value which a man adds to himself by the constant, or even the passing, effort of his will. *Demerit* is the contrary. It is not merely the absence of merit: it is a loss, a diminution, an abasement.

Thus the words *merit* and *demerit* do not represent to my mind

ideas of relation; that is to say, the relation of the moral agent to reward or punishment. They have a meaning of their own, and they express the increase or diminution of the internal value of the moral agent by the action of his will. This increase in value is attested by moral satisfaction and by the esteem of men. Diminution, on the contrary, is attested by remorse and contempt.

If happiness is identical with good, and if virtue is the practice of good accompanied by pleasure, then we may say with Spinoza, that happiness is not the reward of virtue, but that it is virtue itself. In other words, I admit, with the Stoics, that virtue is its own reward.

Is this equivalent to saying that there is no moral sanction? Quite the contrary. But while a legal sanction is exterior to the law, and has for its aim the securing of its efficacy by external means, moral sanction is included in the law itself, and is the guaranty of its justice. For a law which should command an agent to sacrifice his happiness to that of other men, and which would sacrifice the happiness of the agent — such a law would destroy itself, by making us do to ourselves what it would forbid us to do to others.

The future life should not be considered as a recompense, but as the peaceable enjoyment of the only thing which has any value — perfection. Properly speaking, it is not a *recompense*, but a *deliverance*.

Immortality is not *individual*, but it is *personal*. The person is not the individual. The individual is composed of all the special accidents which distinguish one man from another. Those accidents perish with us: they are the *flesh*. The person is the *consciousness of the impersonal* — the *spirit*.

Morality leads to religion, which is simply belief in the divine goodness. If the world is not derived from good, and does not go to good, virtue is a powerless chimera. *Practical faith* in the existence of God is, then, what Kant has called it, the *postulate* of the moral law.

This is the theory which will be found unfolded in the following

pages. If it is desired to give any name to this doctrine — which is not unimportant for the sake of giving fixity to ideas — it might be called a sort of *rational eudæmonism*, opposed on the one hand to utilitarian eudæmonism, and on the other to the too abstract formalism of Kant's morality, yet at the same time reconciling the two. This theory seems to me not only true, but also the one in closest conformity with tradition. It is that of Plato and Aristotle, of Descartes and of Leibnitz, and contains nothing which does not agree perfectly with what Bentham calls *deontology*, that is, the science of duty. I strongly approve, and I have attempted to follow, the method which is called conciliatory, and which is simply eclecticism, properly defined. Without this method, philosophy will be but a series of revolutions, each new-comer overturning the work of his predecessors, and being in his turn overthrown by his successors; while true science is, on the contrary, composed of successive acquisitions, which are added together and complete each other. We do not say that a man is enriching himself if he casts one fortune into the sea to prepare to make another, but we say so if he preserves and increases what he already has. Thus Kant's morality should be retained in science; but it should rest upon the morality of Aristotle, which it ought not to cast aside: and, in the reconciliation of these two systems, a noble and enlightened Utilitarianism, like that of J. S. Mill, should find full satisfaction.

Such is the spirit, such are the conclusions, of this volume, which I ask permission to call my *Magna Moralia*, in honor of Aristotle, who has so often inspired me, and to distinguish it from the small elementary treatise on morality which preceded it, and of which it is the crown.

PARIS, Oct. 18, 1873.

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THE THEORY OF MORALS.

THE philosopher Schleiermacher has resolved all moral ideas into three fundamental ones, which are too frequently confounded — the idea of *good*, the idea of *duty* and the idea of *virtue;* and has taken this distinction as the basis of his theory of morals. This analysis appears to me correct; and I shall make use of it, though I shall give it a free interpretation. In fact, in every moral action one can and should distinguish three things: First, an *object*, or an end to be pursued and attained; this is what is called the *good:* Second, an *agent*, who performs the good, and thus acquires a *habit* or *quality*, which is called *virtue:* Third and last, a *law*, which determines the relation of the agent to the end; and this law is *duty*. In contrast with these three fundamental ideas, there are three exactly contrary ideas, — *evil*, *vice* and *interdiction* or *prohibition*.

These ideas may be said to follow each other and to be linked together in the following order: *good*, *duty*, *virtue*. Virtue, indeed, according to the most generally accepted definition, consists in fulfilling one's duty; that is to say, in following that rule of action which our reason commands or advises. Duty, in its turn, consists in doing that which is good: it is the rule of action required of us by the practice of good. Thus virtue presupposes duty, and duty presupposes good. If there were nothing good, there would be no rule of action to teach us to choose one object rather than

another: there would be no duty. If there were no duty, or rule of action, there would be no virtue; that is to say, no enlightened choice between good and evil. Hence an enlightened choice of good — that is to say, virtue — presupposes a rule of choice, or duty, which, again, presupposes a reason for the choice, — that is to say, a good.

Hence arise three problems: What is good? What is duty? What is virtue? We have just given what is called in the schools the *nominal* definition of each: we must now seek to find the *real* definition. It was necessary to begin with the former, for otherwise we could not know what to seek after. But we ought also to obtain the second, and this is the true object of our science. The first gives us only a name for the object: the second should teach us the nature of that object.

Moral science has often been accused of turning in a vicious circle. What is good? it asks. It is to do one's duty. What is it to do one's duty? It is to do that which is good. Thus good is defined by duty, and duty by good. But this circle is only apparent: the word good does not have the same meaning in these two applications. In the first case one understands by *good*, moral good, that is to say, the good accomplished by a free and enlightened agent, that is to say, virtue; and it is quite true, that good thus understood and defined consists in doing one's duty. In the second case one understands the word good to mean good in itself, that which is naturally and essentially good, that which is anterior and superior to my will; in other words, the final and pre-eminently desirable end. Now, it is certain that duty consists in striving after, and if possible procuring for ourselves, such a good as this. There is here no trace of a vicious circle.

Let us express in another way the three fundamental ideas of moral science, and the relations by which they are mutually connected.

Every action necessarily has an object. It is impossible to will without choosing *something*. To choose *nothing* is the

same as *not* to will at all. Now if, among the objects of our desires, there were not some which in themselves and before any act of willing were good or evil, there would be no reason for choosing one rather than another. There must, then, be one part of moral science — and it will be the basis of all the rest — which is logically anterior to all considerations derived from the agent or the subject: there is a moral science the chief aim of which is to determine the nature of the *object* of the choices; this we call *objective* moral science.

Whatever may be the nature of that object which we call good, it can be obtained by an agent only in accordance with certain conditions which depend upon the nature of that agent. In moral science, as in metaphysics, we must distinguish the object from the *subject*. The term good, in fact, can never be applied except as something known, desired, wished, by a subject.[1] This subject is called the *agent*. From this results a whole series of phenomena belonging to the subject, from which it follows that good in the subject is never absolutely identical with good as it exists in the object. Undoubtedly one might imagine a moral subject who should at last become identified with his object, good; but this would be only an ideal conception. In reality, there is always a divergence between good as it is represented, conceived, wished, by the subject, and good in the abstract. There is, then, a part of moral science which relates to the agent, and which may be called *subjective*.

And yet, although the subject always modifies the object more or less in taking it into his intelligence or feelings, this is not always done arbitrarily and intentionally: for this would be to destroy the very idea of an object; that is to say, of good. The nature of good being, in itself, independent of the subject, it should impress itself upon the subject in an absolute manner, taking no account of its individual modifications. From this results a general law, or law of

[1] According to the scholastic axiom: "*Quidquid recipitur secundem naturam recipientis recipitur.*"

duty, which is, in a certain sense, as Kant has expressed it, the *form* of our actions, and which applies with uniformity to every will, presenting itself in all our actions with a permanent character. Hence arises another part of moral science, *formal* moral science, which serves as a bond between the other two, and a transition from one to the other; *form* being in reality a sort of intermediate term between the object and the subject.

Thus objective moral science will be the theory of good; formal moral science will be the theory of duty; subjective moral science will be the theory of morality or of virtue.

However plausible the preceding deductions may appear, they will encounter objections in some schools of moral science. One whole class of moralists regards moral science as being exclusively subjective; good is only a *state* and a modification of the subject; law is only a *manner* of choosing and combining the various sensations, that is to say, the various subjective states of the agent. For these moralists neither objective nor formal moral science has any existence. They are the partisans of pleasure or of utility.

For others, on the contrary, moral science cannot be reduced to subjective modifications without destroying itself; for all morality presupposes a rule, a law, a universal form for actions. Thus there is a formal moral science which is higher than the subjective: it is the moral science of duty. But the moral science of duty presupposes nothing anterior to itself. Duty is its reason, its essential principle. According to Kant, to give morality any other object than law is to destroy its very idea. In this system there is no objective moral science: I will add that it admits no subjective moral science. Kant never considered any thing but abstract, pure, and ideal law in relation to an abstract agent. He never inquired what would be the result if this law were brought into relation with a real and concrete agent, and passed through a human conscience. In a word, he confined himself, and chose to confine himself, to the *formal* portion of moral science.

Before explaining my own ideas of good, duty, and virtue, it will be my task to examine the points of view, first, of those who consider, in moral science, nothing but the subject; second, of those who consider only the form of the action, i.e., the philosophy of pleasure; and the philosophy of duty.

BOOK FIRST.

THE END OR GOOD.

CHAPTER I.

PLEASURE AND GOOD.

WHAT is good? If there is any reply to this question which is universally accepted by mankind, it would seem that it must be this: good is that which all seek and pursue, it is that which all would possess if they could obtain it. Now, this object which all pursue, with or without reflection, but everywhere and always, what is it but pleasure? Pleasure is the good, is the cry of nature. All animals seek pleasure, and know no other principle of action. The child is sensitive to pleasure only: the grown man, with more apparent gravity, has no other object. The virtuous man himself finds pleasure in practising virtue. The philosopher who denies and refutes the doctrine of pleasure, finds pleasure in refuting it. And yet, is pleasure the good? The noblest schools of philosophy have always denied that it is so. But, to understand this question properly, it must be distinguished from two others which are frequently confounded with it, but which are entirely distinct from it: Is pleasure a good? Does pleasure form a part of good? Even if we grant that pleasure is a good (which, indeed, it would be absurd to deny), or, further, that it is a necessary condition or consequence of good, it would not follow that it was the sole good, the true good, the whole good: this is the point which we must examine at the outset. The two other questions will come up in their proper place in the course of these studies.[1]

We may assume that the innumerable analyses made before our day have already sufficiently demonstrated that pleasure

[1] Chap. iv., The Principle of Happiness.

by itself alone is incapable of serving as the basis for any moral science whatever, and that it must at least yield this place to the principle of utility. In fact, pleasure without bounds, without choice, without foresight; pleasure taken by chance, and according to the impulse of the moment; pleasure sought and enjoyed under any form in which it may present itself; a brutal and sensual pleasure preferred to any intellectual pleasure, — pleasure thus understood destroys itself; for experience teaches us that it is followed by pain, and is transformed into pain. Such a principle is, then, self-contradictory, and falls before its own consequences. Even among the ancients, the Epicureans, who maintained the philosophy of pleasure, distinguished two kinds of pleasure, which they called the *stable* and the *transitory*. They had observed that the pleasure of the passions, which they called *transitory* pleasure, was a mingled one, which, disturbing the soul, caused it more pain than joy: repose, peace, insensibility, appeared to them far superior; and in their view the paramount good consisted in *indolentia*, i.e., the absence of suffering. It has therefore been rightly said, that this voluptuous morality of Epicureanism, apparently so seductive, was in reality only a sad and gloomy asceticism. One branch of this school regarded suicide as the sovereign good. It is said that Lucretius acted upon the precepts of this sect. That these strange consequences were the result of the philosophy of voluptuousness shows clearly, that, unless some intellectual element is joined with it, the principle of pleasure is by itself utterly incapable of regulating and purifying the use and enjoyment of pleasure itself.

Plato has demonstrated in his "Theætetus," that pleasure, without a certain admixture of intelligence and wisdom, is as though it were not. In fact, without intelligence there could be no memory, no foresight; we should find ourselves deprived of both past and future pleasures; it is doubtful even if it would be correct to say that one can enjoy present pleasure without some reflection. Plato has

also proved that we should distinguish between true and false pleasures, between those that are mixed and those that are pure, between the noble and the ignoble. Finally, he was the first to whom occurred the idea of an *arithmetic of pleasures*,[1] — an idea which Bentham subsequently applied with great sagacity.

Bentham has shown that pleasures may be compared and classified from different points of view, the principal of which are, *certainty*, *purity*, *duration*, *intensity*, etc. Indeed, between two pleasures, one of which is certain, and the other uncertain, wisdom and experience would plainly teach us to choose the former. The same is true as between a pleasure which is *pure* — that is, without any element of pain — and a pleasure which is mixed; between a pleasure that is *lasting*, and one which is fleeting and fugitive; between a pleasure which is very lively and *intense*, and one which is moderate and without special charm: reason would evidently teach us to prefer purity, durability, and intensity. Combine now these different relations, add the probable *number* of pleasures, and you will be enabled to frame rules which will together form the *art* of life, and whose effect is to insure us that which is popularly called *happiness;* that is, *the greatest possible amount of pleasure with the least possible amount of pain.*

It is plain that this art is purely empirical, that it does not rise for an instant above the level of a merely subjective philosophy; for it is always pleasure — that is, a certain state of consciousness — which is the sole object, the sole aim, of human life. Thus, there is no other *object* than our own sensations. There is also no *law*. The various rules which this philosophy offers us are only the *means* of attaining the desired end, of obtaining pleasure. If reason, wisdom, intelligence, are added to sensation, as Plato requires, it is not that they may command pleasure, but that they may serve it: they are only the auxiliaries, the instruments, of pleasure.

[1] Μετρητικὴ τέχνη, Protagoras, 357, 358. Éd. H. Étienne.

This philosophy appears to rise above that of pure sensation, assuming the title of the philosophy of *utility*. Like the wisdom of the vulgar, it teaches us to prefer the useful to the agreeable, prudence to passion. But, at bottom, the useful is never a good by and in itself: it is, and can be, only a means of procuring what is agreeable. Prudence, in its turn, is merely the art of satisfying one's passions with impunity.

The Utilitarians have sometimes complained that two opposite faults are imputed to their philosophy. Sometimes, they say, we are reproached for unchaining the passions, for drawing men away into an impetuous and disorderly worship of voluptuousness and the senses: sometimes, on the contrary, we are accused of teaching a dry, cold, calculating morality, which extinguishes all the sentiments, all the emotions, all the impulses, of the soul. Is not this, they say, a contradiction?

This contradiction is only apparent. It is equally correct to say that the philosophy of pleasure is disorderly, and that it is withering; that it is violent, impetuous, uncurbed; and that it is dreary, cold, narrow: these accusations are both true, according as we have in view uncalculating or calculated pleasure. A voluptuous and passionate philosophy, like that of Aristippus in antiquity, that of Callicles in Plato's "Gorgias," or that of some modern poets and romancers, is, in fact, a philosophy which, unchaining all the passions, lets loose at the same time all the appetites. It opens a free pathway for the senses, and thus sometimes descends to shameful excesses; but on the other hand, in freeing the passions from all restraint, it acquires a certain sort of grandeur — the fierce grandeur of nature; it has even a sort of innocence — the innocence of the blind torrent which knows not whither it rushes; and finally, by the very fact of making no distinction between the passions and pleasures, it sometimes gives free play to generous instincts, and thus attains a nobility which is lacking in cold calculation and

mercenary virtue. On the other hand, the philosophy of calculated pleasures is superior to the philosophy of passion, in that it requires both the passions and the senses to submit to restraint; hence it is more *respectable*, and adapts itself better to the necessities and the order of society. It may even be said, speaking from a practical point of view, and in the interest of the common order of life, that the selfish philosophy does not differ greatly from the philosophy of duty, save in its maxims and principles. But while from this point of view we may find the utilitarian morality more respectable than the morality of passion, on the other hand, for the very reason that it subjects passion to calculation, it has less spontaneity, less nobility and generosity, than the morality of passion. Little by little it makes the fear of suffering dominate the desire of pleasure, and to avoid one it dries up the sources of the other. Hence comes that character of dryness and of moral poverty, of which the Utilitarians have been a hundred times accused. Hence comes also that sort of melancholy and empty austerity which characterizes an egotistical life, and which has been observed in Epicureanism. Thus, according as the philosophy of pleasure inclines toward freedom of the passions, or toward cold calculation, it oscillates between the life of the brutes, or the death in life of a stone or of a corpse. It is, therefore, not inconsistent to accuse this philosophy, sometimes of one, sometimes of the other, of these consequences. It may, then, be said, that the philosophy of pleasure refutes the philosophy of utility, and that the philosophy of utility refutes the philosophy of pleasure; in other words, that these two forms of the same principle refute each other. On the one hand, the partisans of utility admit that pleasure alone is not sufficient; else why are they not satisfied with it? If it is necessary to make a choice between pleasures, it is because pleasure is not a principle which is sufficient in itself. But, on the other hand, neither is utility a principle; for what is the meaning of *useful?* That

which serves some purpose. The useful is a means, it is not an end: the end is the good; the useful is only the means of obtaining it. Now, for the partisans of utility this end can be nothing but pleasure; that is, the very principle whose emptiness they have shown. If pleasure is the good, let me seek it as I understand it: the philosophy of voluptuousness is, then, right as compared with the utilitarian philosophy. If, on the contrary, it is necessary to make a choice between pleasures, as the Utilitarians maintain, and as the very idea of philosophy requires, then I need a reason for making that choice; and this reason cannot be drawn from the pleasure itself, since this is what is to be disciplined and governed.

Meanwhile an eminent thinker has recently endeavored to give a new turn to Utilitarianism:[1] he has thought that he could find in pleasure itself a principle capable of rising above pleasure, a reason for choice which would permit us to differentiate and graduate our pleasures in the name of pleasure itself. This point of view is worthy of our attention, particularly as it seems to approach nearly the view which I shall myself suggest in the following chapters. It is so much the more important to state in what respects I agree with the English author, and, above all, in what I differ from him.

Mr. J. Stuart Mill admits that most Utilitarians have made the mistake of estimating true goods by the exterior advantages which they procure for us, instead of by their essential nature. Thus, they advise men to cultivate pity from the fear that they may themselves be overtaken by misfortune; friendship, for the sake of the services which they may expect from others; to keep their promises faithfully in expectation of a just reciprocity, etc. This is giving too great importance to the consequences of the acts, instead of giving it to the acts themselves. But these philosophers could not have taken a nobler stand-point without contradicting the

[1] J. Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, London, 1863.

principle of utility. This principle does not forbid us to admit that certain classes of pleasures are more valuable than others. In fact, men distinguish *quality* from *quantity* in every thing. Why should it not be the same in estimating pleasures? The Utilitarians have too often regarded in pleasure nothing but the quantity; i.e., duration, certainty, intensity, etc. They have not, indeed, wholly left out of sight the other element; as we see, for example, that the Epicureans regarded mental as superior to sensual pleasures. But as a general thing, especially with Bentham and his school, good is estimated by the quantity of pleasures, by their sum, by their intensity, much more than by their value and intrinsic worth. This is the reason why noble and refined spirits have had so little respect for this philosophy. Mr. Mill admits that it cannot be altogether justified: but, according to him, this is the fault of the philosophers, not of the principle; for we are not obliged to measure the value of pleasure by such ignoble standards. The reform which he proposes is, therefore, the introduction of the principle of *quality* into the estimation of pleasures. Thanks to this new principle, his philosophy is broader and nobler. He does not confine himself to pure Epicureanism, but thinks that it is necessary to introduce "many Stoic as well as Christian elements."[1] Here we find a Utilitarianism of a very different sort from that of Bentham. In fact, reduced to these terms, the discussion is merely one of theory. For myself, I see no difficulty in accepting the theory of pleasure when thus transformed; for the principal ground of my objection to utilitarian philosophy is, that it considers only the quantity of pleasures, and not their quality. Replace one by the other, and we can agree; but, then, has not the principle been changed? Would not what is called the quality of pleasures be identical with what men call good, and which appears to them a rule superior to pleasure?

If pleasure is the good, if it is the final element which is reached in the analysis of good, two pleasures ought not to

[1] J. Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 11.

be distinguishable one from the other, to be preferred one to another, one judged better, the other lesser, unless one contains *more* good than the other, — that is to say, *more pleasure:* hence two pleasures can differ only by quantity. If, on the contrary, you say of two pleasures that one is in itself, and by its own nature, *better* than the other, then there must be something aside from the pleasure itself which gives one this superiority over the other. The quality of pleasure cannot be derived from the pleasure itself, but from the different causes which produce it; for, among so many pleasures, all must be equal unless they differ in quality. If they are not equal, if they contain more or less of nobility, of purity, of refinement, if it is in this way that they should be distinguished one from another and estimated, then it follows that good is not pleasure as such, but pleasure in so far as it is noble or refined: consequently good is this something noble or refined which places certain favored pleasures above all others.

The able author admits this himself when he says that human happiness is not of the same order as the happiness of animals, because it is derived from more *elevated* faculties.[1] But what is a more elevated faculty? Is it not a faculty which, in itself, and even before it has procured us any pleasure, is more noble, more excellent, *better* than another? There is, then, a principle of appreciation apart from pleasure; and things differ in degree, in excellence, in intrinsic worth, even before they differ as to the pleasure which they cause us. If they did not thus differ by some intrinsic excellence, the pleasures derived from them might differ in quantity, but not in quality. Some good exists, then, before there is any pleasure: and the pleasure is not the good, but it is the consequence of the good; it is not the measure of the good, but is itself measured by the good.

Mr. Mill understood clearly the difficulty of reconciling

[1] "*Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites.*" — *Utilitarianism*, p. 11.

the principle of pleasure, taken as the fundamental principle of moral philosophy, with the corrective which he has now added, that is, the choice of *quality* in pleasure. He sought a criterion by which to distinguish the quality of pleasures without giving up the fundamental principle of the utilitarian philosophy, and this is the ingenious method which he invented: —

"If I am asked what I mean by the difference of quality in pleasures, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all, or almost all, who have experience of both, give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation, and prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity, as to render it, in comparison, of small account." [1]

By this we see that Mr. Mill seeks to discover an empirical criterion for the quality of pleasure — a criterion which shall not be drawn from the intrinsic and absolute worth of things, but only from the general estimate of mankind: and this is found, in his opinion, in the judgment of competent persons; that is to say, of those who have experienced the two kinds of pleasure. For example, a common debauchee or a greedy speculator might despise the pleasures of science, art, virtue; but they are incompetent judges, Mr. Mill tells us; they have never experienced the pleasures which they despise. Very good; but may not the argument be applied conversely? Would a St. Vincent de Paul or a Newton be competent to estimate, if they despise sensual pleasures, the delights of wild passions? Might not libertines maintain that a life of pleasure has joys of infinite profundity which ascetics or pedants are incapable of appreciating? See, in Plato's "Gorgias," with what poetical enthusiasm Callicles sings the praises of a life of passion and the right of the

[1] *Utilitarianism*, p. 12.

strongest, and in what a ridiculous and contemptible light he exhibits a virtuous and temperate life. So, too, modern poets have sung in the sweetest strains of brigands (*vide* Schiller), of corsairs (*vide* Byron), etc.; and are moralists thoroughly competent to appreciate the pleasures which may be found in these wild, rebellious lives? Thus, saints and wise men would be rejected as incompetent judges by those whose passions and vices they condemn.

Again, do we not see very great men (Julius Cæsar, Mirabeau, Fox) who experienced at once both kinds of pleasures, those of the mind and spirit, and those of the passions and the senses, who, far from sacrificing the one to the other, sought relaxation throughout their lives by passing from one to the other? They were competent judges, but their competence would only teach us that each kind of pleasure is good in its own time. Others, again (like Augustine and Rancé), have passed from passion to virtue, from an irregular to a pious life. Assuredly, in their second mode of life they held the first in detestation; but their competency might be contested: they did not undergo the two experiences in the same conditions. While they were young they gave themselves up to pleasure: it was when they were mature, or old, when their passions were deadened, their fire quenched, that their eager and active spirits sought for other objects. It does not necessarily follow that the second kind of pleasures was more desirable than the first.

It is not, then, by the tastes of those who enjoy that we can judge of the quality of pleasure; but it is the quality of the pleasure that decides the worth of our tastes, and gives them differing values in the estimation of mankind. Again, if pleasures differ in quality, it is not because some give more pleasure than others, even to competent judges (which would be in reality estimating the quality by the quantity); but it is because they are derived from purer sources, and, as Mr. Mill has well expressed it, because they come to us from nobler and more elevated faculties. It must be that there

are goods which have a certain excellence within themselves, since the pleasures connected with them appear to us more or less excellent.

But, it will be objected, those goods which you call excellent in themselves, which are so by an intrinsic perfection, are in a final analysis simply something desirable, either for yourself or for others: you call them goods, because they are able to procure pleasure to some of your fellow-creatures, to the most enlightened men, or, if you will, to angelic creatures, etc. Thus, what you call intrinsic excellence is nothing more than the power of procuring pleasure.

I answer, that even if good is defined as "that which is desirable," we must first determine what is meant by the word desirable. For it does not mean here that which is actually desired, but that which is *worthy* of being desired, and *ought* to be desired. As a matter of fact, we do not find that men in general seek most eagerly the most desirable goods. The majority care more for fortune or for comfort than for the noblest goods—family, country, science, religion. Nevertheless, we consider these latter goods as superior to the others, as more desirable and more excellent. Even when we do not find ourselves capable of preferring them to lower goods, we do not fail to perceive that they are worth more than those which we prefer to them; and we regret that we have not the strength of mind to sacrifice what pleases us most to that which would give our being a higher worth, were we but capable of enjoying it. Hence there must be in these goods something more than is found in the others, else we should not consider them as deserving the preference. This ability to procure a greater happiness, and one which is of higher value, must be due to their manifest superiority.

Although it is desire which tells us of the presence of good, yet it is not the desire itself which makes a certain thing good; it is only a sign which indicates the presence of good; but we can then consider the good in itself, independently

of the sign which has revealed it to us. For this reason I cannot accept this proposition of Spinoza's: "It is not because a thing is good that we desire it, it is because we desire it that it is good."[1] A thing which was neither good nor bad could not be desired: that which has no definite quality can procure no pleasure, and consequently can arouse no desire. It is, then, the nature of the object which renders it desirable, and consequently it is good in itself before it is desired: by this means only we are able to measure and estimate the nobility or the excellence of pleasures, for pleasures are more or less excellent according as their cause is more or less excellent; otherwise, if it is desire which creates good, whatever pleases would be a good from that fact alone, and passion would become the sole judge and the sole measure of good and evil.

Spinoza himself teaches, as I do, that good is not that which causes pleasure, but that which makes us pass from a lesser degree of perfection to a greater; and that, on the other hand, evil is that which diminishes our perfection. Now, whether this increase or diminishing of being which constitutes good and evil is attended by joy or by sadness, these two passions are only the effects, not the causes, of the good: it is in proportion as man develops his faculties that he becomes capable of joy; and, in Spinoza's opinion, the highest joy is that which results from the noblest and the purest

[1] Ethics, part iii. propos. xxix., *Scholium*. Aristotle seems to say the contrary. (Met., xii., vii. — 1070, a 29.) Ὀρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι καλὸν δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ διότι ὀρεγόμεθα. I. "We desire a thing because it seems to us beautiful, rather than it seems to us beautiful because we desire it." Cumberland also refutes this opinion: "I, on the contrary, am of opinion that things are first judged to be good, and that they are afterwards desired only so far as they seem good; that any thing is therefore truly judged good because its effect or force truly helps nature: that a private good is that which profits one; public which is of advantage to many. . . . The nature of man requires that reason, examining the nature of things, should, from the evidence thence unalterably arising, first determine and judge what is good (whether in relation to ourselves or others) before we desire it, or are delighted therewith. And it is the part of brutes only, to measure the goodness of things, or of actions, by affection only, without the guidance of reason." — *The Laws of Nature*, chap. iii., § 2.

action, which is the contemplation and love of God. So, too, in Aristotle's opinion, the greatest happiness is found in contemplation, either of God by men, or of God by himself. But if the noblest action results from the contemplation of absolute being, or, if you will (to satisfy all systems), of the true and the beautiful, is it not certain that the true and the beautiful are goods in themselves? It is, then, in proportion as they are so that they should be desired and sought after: hence Spinoza was wrong in saying that it is desire which makes the good, and not the good which causes the desire.

Whatever one may do, unless one introduces into the philosophy of pleasure a foreign and superior element, one can never find a rule which will explain why certain pleasures should be preferred to others: now, if there is no such rule, there is no moral science. The arithmetic of pleasure, as Bentham has invented it, is certainly a very ingenious method; and it is a credit to the thinker who has formulated and worked it out; but it is doubtful whether it could furnish us a scale of valuation for the different goods which men may pursue.

In a philosophy of pleasure only, there can be no criterion for the classification of goods: no good will absolutely and by right occupy a certain place; for as pleasure is essentially relative to the individual, and varies with different organizations, and with the varying circumstances of life, what is a good for one will not be so for another, and what is the greatest good to some will not be so to others. For example, the certainty of pleasure is undoubtedly an element in the calculation, but not for every one: some find more pleasure in running the risk of obtaining a very great good than in being contented with the certainty of a moderate good. It is the same in regard to purity: many men, for example, prefer the violent and exciting pleasures of passion to the commonplace pleasures of a regular life; it may be, from the point of view of pleasure only, that they are right.

If, without confusing one's self with the thousand preferences and the infinite disagreements of individual passions, one seeks some firm basis for the appreciation of human goods by inquiring of experience what are the objects which men generally love most, and in what order these are beloved, — if one resorts to this test, one will be struck with the fact already noted, which is, that men generally love the goods of this world in inverse proportion to their excellence and their beauty. To prove this fact, it suffices to invoke the testimony of moralists and of preachers, not only preachers of religion, but also of morals and politics. Everywhere you will see enlightened and superior men reproaching the crowd for its ignoble attachments. If religion is in question, it is accused of preferring idols to the true God; if politics, of preferring security to liberty; if morals, of preferring material interest to honor. Poets, who do not trouble themselves about morals, religion, or politics, also sigh over the ignoble instincts of the multitude, who are ignorant of the divine pleasures of enthusiasm, or of the beautiful. Finally, even those who sing the praises of passion seek to make it gleam before our eyes as being nobler and more excellent than the gross interests and coldly calculating combinations which govern the ordinary relations of life.

What must we conclude from these facts? This: that, if we consult the only criterion which we have for estimating the degree of pleasure which different goods procure for mankind, we shall see that by common consent the most ignoble pleasures are those which are preferred, while those of a more excellent nature are sought by a small number only. From this we must conclude, either that these superior pleasures are purely chimerical, thus renouncing all ideals; or else that there is some other principle of classification, and that they should be valued, not according to the pleasure which they procure for us, but according to that which they would secure us if we were in a condition to comprehend and enjoy them; in other words, according to their intrinsic worth.

Thus all moral distinctions would disappear, all choice between good and evil would become arbitrary, if we were not to suppose that there is some real, essential, objective basis, which will enable us to grade and value pleasures in an order contrary to that of our instincts. We are not to seek for good in a form of our feeling, nor even in a resultant form or comparison of our states of consciousness, but in something deeper. Pleasure is not thus excluded from the rank of goods, but it is not the supreme good.

Undoubtedly there is in moral philosophy an element which is incontestably subjective; and, as we shall see later, each one must act, and be judged, only according to the actual state of his individual conscience; but this subjective element, which consists in the more or less enlightened knowledge which each one may have of the law according to circumstances, nevertheless leaves intact the idea of law, and the idea of an objective distinction between good and evil. The opinion which we form of one and of the other may be more or less modified by our individual situation; but still we must recognize an essential distinction, which is founded on something above us. In the philosophy of pleasure, on the contrary, every thing is subjective; and the rule is only a comparison, a combination, or a calculation, made between our various sensations, — that is to say, between the different ways in which we may be affected — in such a way that in reality it is always sensation which is the last term of our action: it is the Ego with its agreeable or disagreeable states of consciousness which is its own sole and final object; while the conscience, even when unenlightened, and forced to judge solely by its relative and imperfect light, still presents to us something which is good or bad beyond the impressions of our sensibility.

Above the philosophy of pleasure rises, then, necessarily and legitimately, the philosophy of duty; that is to say, the philosophy of *law*. To make it possible that our actions should be judged morally, there must be a law which com-

mands some, and forbids others — a law necessarily superior to the wishes and desires of each individual, which will be the same for all men under the same circumstances, without regard to the sensibilities of each individual. Such is the law, called the law of *duty*, which Kant has so ably declared and defended against the partisans of pleasure or of utility. This law, of universal application, with a character of absolute authority, and a uniform and identical attitude, is, to use Kant's expression, the *form* of action; and that part of moral science which is devoted to the determination of the nature of the law will then be called, as I have already said, *formal* morality. Thus, from the moral *subjectivity*, maintained by the partisans of pleasure or of utility, we rise to that moral *formalism* which is taught by Kant.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD AND LAW.

THE question which now presents itself to us is the following: Does not *formal* moral science, that is to say the theory of *law* or the theory of *duty*, necessarily imply the existence of something anterior to itself? Does it alone form the whole of moral science? Is there nothing beyond and above the law? Is this sufficient unto itself? Is it its own basis? or, expressing this problem in the same form in which Kant stated it; Is *good* the principle of *duty?* or, Is *duty* the principle of *good?* The original and bold feature of Kant's philosophy is, that he endeavored to establish one while taking away every kind of real and effective *end*, freeing the law from any *object* other than itself, and reducing morality to an abstract, empty maxim; in a word, to use his own expression, making morality consist exclusively of the *form*, and not of the *matter*, of the action.

We must examine this theory before advancing farther; for if it is well founded, then it would be utterly useless to make any inquiries as to the nature of good. Of the three divisions which I have distinguished in moral science, one of which treats of good, the second of duty, and the third of morality or of virtue, the first would no longer survive, but would become confounded with the others. Objective would disappear before formal morality.

In Kant's morality two elements must be distinguished — one which is incontestable, and should be preserved in every system of philosophy; the other, arbitrary and extreme, to which many objections may be made. The first is his theory

of duty, the second his theory of good. His analysis of duty is perfect: he has proved conclusively that duty is a universal law, obligatory for its own sake, and not on account of its consequences. He has clearly distinguished the law of duty from the rules of prudence and the calculations of interest: he has shown that morality consists exclusively in obedience to law through respect for law. But if the theory of duty laid down in Kant's philosophy leaves nothing to be desired, it is not the same with his theory of good: this borders upon an abstract formalism, which does not seem to furnish a sufficiently firm foundation for a moral science.[1]

In fact, it is a fundamental point in Kant's philosophy (and he admits himself that it is a paradox), that duty is not founded upon good, but that good is founded upon duty. We should not say, "Do this because it is good," but, "That is good, for you ought to do it." The reason why an action is good is that it is obligatory; while we should rather be inclined to believe that it is obligatory only because it is good. Thus, we believe that justice or sincerity are things which are good in themselves, and that this is the reason why they should be sought and practised. No, says Kant: if these things are good, it is because they are enjoined upon us by a law, which is the law of duty. Why does this law exist? We do not know. This is what he calls the primary fact of practical reason. *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, he says: this is the formula of moral law. We may recognize it by a certain sign, which is, the universality of the law; but we cannot explain it.

How was Kant led to adopt this theory? By the profound analysis which he made of the idea of duty. He begins by maintaining that there is only one thing here below which is

[1] I ought also to mention two other theories of Kant's — one, the theory of the *moral individual* (see p. 39), and the theory of the *autonomy of the will* (see Book ii., chap. ii., p. 185). It will be necessary to examine how far these two theories agree with the moral formalism of Kant. In reference to all these questions, one may profitably consult M. Jules Barni, *Examen Critique de la Morale de Kant*, Paris, 1851.

absolutely good: this is what he calls a *good will.* In truth, all the things of this world have merely a relative value, and are good or evil only according to the use that is made of them. It is the good use which is good, not the thing itself. On the other hand, a good will is good in itself, and it is not necessary to await its results before deciding that it is so. A good will is, then, the only good which is really absolute. Now, if we analyze the idea of a good will, what do we find it to be? Nothing else, according to Kant, but the will to do one's duty: and to do one's duty is not merely to act *conformably* to duty; it is to act *for the sake of* duty. An exterior conformity to the law of duty has only a *legal* value, and acquires *moral* worth only when it is accompanied within by the will to do one's duty: morality, then, consists in this will itself. Now, if the goodness of the action or the goodness of the will consists exclusively in acting *for the sake of* duty, it is plain that the worth of the action does not lie in the action itself, but in the *motive* of the action, or, as Kant expresses it, in the *maxim* of the action. Change the maxim, and the same action may be alternately good or evil; change the action while retaining the same motive, and the most widely differing actions will have the same moral value. Now the maxim of the action, the motive of the action, is what Kant calls its *form.* The object of the action is what he calls its *matter.* Morality, then, consists exclusively in the form, and not in the *matter*, of the action.

Let us assume, for instance, that there exists something which is good in itself, anterior to the law: we could pursue this object for one of two reasons only, either because it might be *obligatory*, or because it might be *desirable.* In the latter case we have the philosophy of pleasure, which has already been refuted; in the former case we have precisely Kant's theory; it would be the obligation which would establish the good, not the good which would establish the obligation.

These results would still be true, according to Kant, even

if the object offered to our wills were not an object of the senses, like the pleasure or the interest of the philosophy of Epicurus or Hobbes, but an intellectual object, such as perfection, the divine will, universal order, or the necessary relations of things. None of these objects can act upon our wills without acting first upon our feelings. If we reply to this, that as soon as the first conception of these objects dawns upon us, they immediately appear to us to be obligatory; that we cannot, for example, conceive the idea of perfection, of the divine will, or of the order of things, without at once conceiving also that it is our duty to strive for this perfection, to conform ourselves to this order or to this will, — then these may well be accepted as principles of moral science; but it will be because the conception of duty has been introduced into them. Thus the sole legitimate root of morality springs from the idea of the law.

I cannot accept this theory. It seems to me that it is purely hypothetical, and a thing that Kant has never proved, when he maintains that no object, even a rational one, can control the will except by means of pleasure or pain. Undoubtedly the question arises here, whether man is capable of acting from reason alone; but this question is the same, whether we consider the law, or whether we consider an object anterior to the law. Whether the basis of moral science is duty anterior to good, as Kant maintains, or good anterior to duty, as I believe, in either case the question arises whether pure reason is able, by itself, to control the will, or whether it is not necessary that there should be also some motive of feeling. But Kant does not here speak of the moral force of the agent, but of the imperative power of the moral principle: hence I cannot see why he should be unwilling to admit that a rational object may control the will in some other way than by the inducement of pleasure. Undoubtedly an object conceived theoretically by the reason does not by that very fact become a principle of action; for I can conceive clearly the idea of a triangle inscribed

within a given circle, and of the means necessary to produce it, without ever being inclined to realize it unless I feel some need of it. But why should the same be true of every rational object? May there not be objects, such as the idea of perfection, or of the order of the world, or of the imitation of God, which cannot be conceived without producing simultaneously the necessity for obeying them — in a word, such as will immediately appear to us imperative or obligatory? Doubtless we should have to inquire the reason for this obligation; but even if we could not discover it, have not we just as good a right as Kant to assume as an ultimate fact the obligatory and imperative character of certain intellectual conceptions? The fact of a direct connection between good and obligation is no more difficult to accept than the ultimate fact of a law without cause and a command without reason. This, however, would not be the same thing as accepting Kant's hypothesis: for if we say of perfection, for example, or of conformity to the divine will, or of any other principle, that it is obligatory at the very instant at which it is conceived, we do not thereby make obligation the basis of good, but we derive the obligation from the good itself; for it is in proportion as perfection is good that it appears to us obligatory, not because it is obligatory that it seems to us to be good. Otherwise we should be forced to conclude that perfection, considered in itself, without reference to any will, is neither good nor evil; which would be the same as saying, for example, that God is no better than the Devil, that Ormuzd is in no way superior to Ahriman.

The whole difficulty of this problem arises from an equivocation which it is necessary to explain. The term *good* has, in fact, two meanings; and we must, with Leibnitz, distinguish two kinds of good — *natural* and *moral*. Moral good undoubtedly presupposes will, the moral intention; and Kant is right in saying that it is consequent upon, and implies the law of, duty. An action is, indeed, *morally* good, only when it is performed for the sake of duty, and not

from any other motive, such as the fear of punishment, personal interest, mechanical habit, etc. But must we therefore conclude that there is no other good except moral good, that there is not some natural good, anterior to the law of duty, and forming the basis of this?

Kant also distinguishes two kinds of good, and he recognizes a natural good, apart from that which is moral: he even says that the German language is very fortunate in possessing two words by which to distinguish two things so widely different one from the other (*gut* and *wohl* — *übel*, *böse*). But this good which is not moral good, which he distinguishes by the expression *wohl*, is simply, according to him, that which causes us pleasure; in other words, it is pleasure itself; hence it cannot be the foundation of duty. The only true and genuine good is that which is ordered, i. e., commanded by the law, the good which results from duty: this is the only one recognized by morality.

But is it true that all which we call good outside of moral good, all which seems to mankind to be naturally good, is so only because it charms our feelings, and gives us pleasure? Must every thing which is not virtue — by which I mean voluntary virtue, the moral act — be reduced to objects of feeling? Are there not true goods, having an essential and effective nature, which, if they cannot be found in exterior things, at least exist within our souls — goods which have a value in themselves independently of their effect upon our feelings, being truly objective and absolute, capable of forming a basis for law, instead of being merely the result of law? All such things as speech, industry, science, a taste for the beautiful, the affections, may undoubtedly become morally good or bad according to the use which is made of them; but are they not truly good in themselves and before any use whatever?

Is there not even one part of virtue which is natural to each one of us, ἀρετὴ φυσική, as Aristotle says; for example, the first promptings of kindness, of moderation, of modesty,

of sincerity — inclinations which are anterior to all education, to all free and premeditated choice? These innate inclinations are simply good as talents are good, as beauty, vigor and wit, are goods.

Moral good seems, then, to be nothing but the good use of natural goods, and plainly presupposes that there is already something which is in itself naturally good: otherwise we could not understand why one action should be good rather than another. Every human action has an object: it is always intended to procure or to destroy, either in ourselves or in others, something determinate and concrete. For example, to save a friend consists in saving either his life or his fortune; to instruct him is to increase the sum of his knowledge; to speak the truth is to employ words in the service of thought. If we assume that these different objects are in themselves absolutely characterless, then we cannot see why these various actions should be better than their opposites. To free moral action from all effective objects is to destroy the action itself. If all the goods in the world, including those of the soul, had in themselves no more value than a pebble, it would be impossible to understand why we ought to seek for some, and avoid others. A moral law which should command us to break stones without any object, for the sake simply of bending our wills, would be a law void of all content, and consequently senseless. The recluses of the Thebaid, who tired themselves out in watering dead sticks, furnish us with a perfect illustration of a purely formal law, freed from every material object. Such an action might be useful as an ingenious apologue, by which the recluses constantly reminded themselves of the vanity of human labor; but if we take it as the perfect type of morality, we fall into the absurd and impracticable.

The Stoics seem to have taken very nearly the same point of view as did Kant. They maintained that all natural goods are *indifferent* (ἀδιάφορα), and that the only good is that which is becoming; that is to say, moral good. They

begin, however, with the consideration of natural goods; but, so soon as nature has led them up to that which is *honestum*, they reject all other good, and reserve that name solely for that which is becoming. For this reason they refused to say that health is good, that life is good, and conversely that pain is an evil.

In one sense they were right, if they meant to say that that which is honest is the only moral good; for it is quite true that virtue only has a moral value. But they were wrong in regarding every thing else as indifferent; for, once again, if nothing has any value in itself, if all the objects in the universe are neither good nor evil, why should it be more becoming, and morally better, to seek for one rather than for the other? Strictly interpreted, the Stoical philosophy would become inadmissible and absurd; it would destroy itself, as Cumberland saw clearly:[1] of those philosophers he says: "Whilst they endeavor to establish the transcendent goodness of virtue, and the egregious evil of vice, they, incautiously, take away the only reason why virtue is good, and vice, evil. For virtue is therefore good (and in truth it is the greatest good), because it determines human actions to such effects as are the principal parts of the public natural good; and consequently tends to improve in all men the natural perfections, both of mind and body." Cicero expressed the same idea by means of an ingenious comparison. "If the culture of the vine," he says, "could acquire a consciousness for itself, it would undoubtedly consider itself the most excellent thing within the vine; but it would not cease to do whatever is necessary to preserve the vine." In truth, if the vine itself had no value, I cannot see how the culture of the vine could have any! Similarly, if all the objects of human activity were worthless, how could moral activity be of any value? It would then be utterly void, and would feed on itself. Finally, Cicero rightly said that the Stoics ended by disagreeing with themselves; since they

[1] *The Law of Nature*, chap. v. § 5.

established degrees between indifferent things, and called some *preferable*, others *not preferable* (προαιρούμενα, ἀπροαιρούμενα).

In another sense also it may be correct to say that that which is *honestum* is the sole good; but this needs explanation. Among the ancients, as well as in common parlance in all languages, the word becoming, and even the word *virtue*, are often used equivocally: for sometimes they mean moral good, virtue properly so called, which is acquired by the exercise of the will, and results from the observance of the law; sometimes they refer to the goods of the soul, the natural qualities of the soul, such as strength, dignity, sincerity, purity, etc. If this is what is meant by that which is becoming, then it is correct to say that this is the sole good: for it is certain that exterior goods, and those of the body, have only a relative value; while the goods of the soul, as we shall see later, have alone an absolute value. It is none the less true, that that which is becoming, if thus defined, is not identical with moral good: it would be the foundation of duty, instead of being its consequence. These qualities, however spiritual they may be, are nevertheless natural goods, distinct from what we have called moral good, that is, voluntary virtue: they have a value in themselves. It is not, as Kant thinks, because they are enjoined by duty that they seem to us to be good: it is because they are naturally and essentially good that they are thus commanded. If certain creatures were made naturally sincere and generous, they would be good creatures, although sincerity and generosity would not be in them the result of an order and a law: they would be considered better than lying and cruel creatures. The goodness of God is none the less a good thing because it is not for him a matter of a duty. Thus goodness, sincerity, the qualities of the soul, natural virtues, are in themselves of inestimable worth; and they constitute what I call the natural good, the basis of moral good. There is, then, a natural good, which results from the very nature and essence of the soul, which should be sought for its own

sake, in preference to every thing else; and every thing else, on the other hand, should be sought for the sake of this: *omnia propter istud, istud autem propter sese expetendum.* Now, that which constitutes such a good is not the pleasure which it procures: it is not to be sought by the feelings, since these are, on the contrary, always inclined to prefer inferior goods; since, as was shown in the preceding chapter, the scale of pleasures is, with the majority of mankind, exactly the reverse of the scale of true goods.

From what has already been said, it is clear that I cannot accept the theory of Kant, that there is but one thing which is absolutely and unequivocally good; that is, a good will. To say this is to confound the objective and the subjective. It is unintentionally to make the state of the conscience of the subject the absolute basis of morality.

Kant is correct in saying that nothing but a good will is absolutely good, if by this he means morally good. But he seems to think, that, aside from a good will, nothing is either good or evil in itself, and that things have value only according to the use that is made of them. Thus intelligence, resolution, self-control, and moderation are, he says, qualities which in themselves are neither good nor evil, but which may become either according to circumstances. This I cannot admit. In itself, intelligence is a good thing; and so are the other qualities just mentioned; they have a true and essential worth; they do not cease to be good, even when a bad use is made of them: it is the use alone which is bad, but the quality itself remains what it is; that is to say, good and praiseworthy. The courage of a villain is praiseworthy in so far as it is courage. Self-possession is always a good thing, even when we must condemn the consequences which result from it. Kant is evidently mistaken when he says that the self-possession of a villain renders him still more contemptible. This is contrary to experience. Energetic qualities joined to villany produce a sort of admiration mingled with the execration which the villain inspires in

us. It is cowardice which would render him more contemptible. Thus, what is noble remains so; although, when mingled with evil, any general appreciation of it becomes complex and difficult. So, too, one may regret the abuse of his wit by a man of great talent; but wit and talent will none the less remain good and admirable things. I shall always admire, and shall always have a right to admire, the wit of Voltaire, even while I condemn the use which he sometimes made of it.

Natural qualities, then, may be good in themselves, independently of the use that is made of them. On the other hand, a good will, considered in reference to the use made of it, is not always absolutely and unrestrictedly good. For example, if I do evil with a good intention, this good intention may undoubtedly be regarded as morally good, if it is really pure and serious; but, nevertheless, it is not absolutely and essentially good. Otherwise it would be useless to enlighten mankind; for, if they only had a good will, it would be of little consequence whether this good will had good or evil for its object. As the Scriptures say, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."[1] The right way, or the good will, would be good in itself; but it would not be so in so far as it conducts to the ways of death. Hence it is not absolutely and perfectly good. Kant did not perceive, that, in thus reducing good to a good will, he really changed his formal into a subjective morality — that the absolute and impersonal character of the law, which in itself is objective, was lost in the individuality of the subject. Undoubtedly, as we shall see later, a good will is the only thing that we have to consider when the morality of the agent is in question;[2] but when we are concerned with the principle of morality, we shall find that it is impossible to preserve the absolute character of duty, unless we seek to base it upon the essential nature of things, and not upon the mere will of the subject.

[1] *Proverbs*, xiv. 12. [2] Book iii., chap. i.

An exclusively formal morality degenerates, not only into a subjective, but also into an arbitrary, morality.

Let us, for a moment, suppose with Kant that good is merely the consequence of duty. I ask in regard to any given action whether it is good or not. According to Kant, it will be good if it is my duty. But why is it my duty? To this there is no reply. Duty is its own reason. Law is law. *Sit pro ratione voluntas.* But a law which is nothing but a law, which commands without giving any reason, is always something arbitrary. It is universal, you say: what difference does that make? It is not the fact of being an exception or a privilege which constitutes the arbitrariness of a law: it is the being without reason. If an absurd law were imposed on all mankind, it would be none the less absurd. It is the peculiarity of the moral law, says Kant, that it gives no reasons: *sic volo, sic jubeo*, is its sole device; but this is the motto of tyrants. If the law of duty itself were to impose itself upon our wills without giving any reason, it would be simply a tyranny.

All the moralists, excepting Crusius and a few theologians, have very nearly agreed in rejecting the doctrine of the divine will, or of *absolute decrees*, which refers the primeval and essential distinction of good and evil back to the sovereign will of a divine legislator. But if the law did not emanate from a supreme legislator and a divine will, would it be any less odious or tyrannical did it give no other reason for its observance but its universality? Even in the doctrine of the divine will, is not the law the same for every one? Undoubtedly there have been theologians who understood the doctrine of *absolute decrees* as meaning a capricious and arbitrary legislation, which was binding on some, while it exempted others from obedience. But this interpretation, more or less required by the exigencies of biblical exegesis, has no philosophical value; and the theory of Crusius cannot be accused of this complication of absurdities. Again, in so far as the law is only a law — that is to say, a rule — in

so far as it is not based upon reason, it is purely arbitrary, whoever the legislator may be, whether divine or human. If, on the other hand, law is enforced by some reason, this reason, which is anterior to the law itself, can be nothing but the intrinsic goodness of the act required: it is, then, goodness which is the basis of duty, not duty which is the basis of goodness.

It is this attempt to make of duty a first principle, anterior to good, which explains, and to a certain extent justifies, the persistence and the revival of utilitarian philosophy.[1] According to Bentham, to do one's duty solely because it is duty, without any other reason, is *asceticism*, no less than it is when one blindly obeys the divine will solely because it is the will of God: to sacrifice the most imperious instincts of nature, to sacrifice the instinct for happiness which God himself has implanted within us, is, in the first place, an attempt to perform what is impossible; but, besides that, it is pure fanaticism if we conceive that we sacrifice it, without any reason for doing so, to a law which commands obedience without telling us why.

The Utilitarians have also justly remarked, that Kant contradicts himself; for, when he desires to give some reason for this absolute law which shall be opposed to any personal and

[1] See, for example, in the *Œuvres* of Charles Dunoyer (t. ii., *Notions d'économie sociale*. Paris, 1870, p. 714), a curious report of a meeting of the Academy of Moral Science for the discussion of the principles of morality. All the essays presented were based upon Kant's theories. The wise political economist criticises and combats them as being borrowed from abstract rationalism and pure formalism. The majority of his criticisms appear to me to be well founded: only the author may have deceived himself if he thinks he is speaking in the name of utilitarian philosophy when he says; "We should estimate different goods according to their *worth*, classify them according to their *rank*, gradually lose our interest in those which are *less noble*, and learn to prefer those which are of *a more exalted nature*, whose acquisition is more difficult, and whose possession is *of infinitely greater value* . . . etc." Where can we find in utilitarian philosophy any principle by which to estimate human goods according to their degree of *nobility* and *dignity*? And, if there were any such, it is just that which I call *that which is becoming*, or *the good*, and which I regard as the basis of duty.

egotistical motive, he in reality borrows his reasons from the criterion of utility. What reason does Kant give for the keeping of promises? Simply, that if we break our word, we seem to admit by that very act that others have a right to break theirs to us, and in such a case it would be impossible to trust any promises! or why should we show pity for human ills? Because we could not desire a state of society in which no one should sympathize with another, and in which consequently we could expect no help if misfortune should overtake us.

"Such a will [he tells us] would destroy itself; for many cases might arise in which we would need the sympathy and assistance of others, and we should have cut ourselves off from all hope of obtaining the aid which we would desire."

This is really the same thing as saying that we must judge our actions by their consequences, in order to determine whether we could desire that they should, to use Kant's formula, become "universal laws of nature." Schleiermacher has also observed, that the criterion most frequently employed by Kant in estimating virtue is its capacity for *rendering one worthy* of happiness; so that the intrinsic hollowness of the law is remedied only by the aid of the principle of utility.

We have just seen that the morality of Kant, logically carried out, will, like the theological doctrine of *absolute decrees*, lead up to an arbitrary and tyrannical law, which imposes itself upon the will without any reason, and by an act of pure despotism. *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, are the words which Kant himself makes it utter. But there has never been any philosophy which, when logically leading to an absurd consequence, did not seek for a remedy by returning to sound principles, even at the risk of compromising the unity of its theory, and the logical connection of ideas. Thus, in Kant's system, by the side of this fundamental theory of moral formalism, or of the priority of duty to good, whose consequences we have just traced out, there is another which cor-

rects and completes it, and which we should examine. This is the theory of *humanity considered as an end unto itself;* that is to say, the inviolability of the moral personality given as a fundamental reason for the law of duty.[1]

It is, indeed, one of the most beautiful and profound of Kant's ideas, this one of establishing as a principle the essential distinction between the *person* and the *thing* — one being of such a nature that it can never be employed as a *means*, but is always and necessarily an *end;* the other being never an end, but only capable of being employed as a means. It is the characteristic of humanity, that it has a right never to be treated as a thing, but to be always respected as an end in itself. On what does this privilege of humanity depend? On the fact of moral personality; that is to say, on the fact of being a free activity endowed with reason. Freedom, together with pure reason (which in one sense Kant does not even distinguish from pure reason), is that which confers on man the title of person: this is what is lacking in a thing. Hence it follows that while a thing may be employed as a means of satisfying our desires, humanity should never be sacrificed for the gratification of our wishes. This truth applies to ourselves as well as to other men, and forms the basis of personal, as well as of social, morality. Under these

[1] It is worthy of notice, that this theory, in itself so important, has not been systematically explained by Kant except in his first treatise on philosophy, his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Later it disappears from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or at least it is no longer regarded as a principle, and is reproduced only incidentally, being brought into no connection with the fundamental ideas of his theory. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant teaches expressly, and without any modifications, the theory of a purely formal law, a law which is its own basis, which has neither end nor reason — a law, finally, which commands by its form, and not by its substance. In his *Rechtslehre*, in which the theory of inviolable personality would most naturally find a place, Kant considers only the abstract form of right — that is, the harmonization of two freedoms — instead of seeking to base it upon his theory of humanity as an end unto itself. Finally, in his *Tugendlehre*, Kant does, indeed, make free use of this principle; but he does not attempt to treat it as one of the general principles of his philosophy, but refers to it only as a self-evident truth.

abstract formulas it is easy to recognize the grand idea of the eighteenth century — the idea which our French philosophers applied to the social and political, while Kant sought for its root in the moral order. It is the idea of *right* — a principle which could have no foundation if it were not admitted that there is in man an essence which no one has a right to violate, not even he who possesses it: the individual is, then, as inviolable to himself as to others; and the ideas of right and of duty spring from the same root.

Undoubtedly this is a noble and solid theory, but how far it can be reconciled with a purely formal philosophy is another question. One can, one even should, admit the principle which I have just explained; but, if this principle is true, what becomes of the theory of a law which commands by its form, and not by its substance, which excludes every *object* and every *end*, requiring simply a subjective and purely abstract maxim; that is, a firm will to obey the law? In my opinion, the principle of ***humanity as an end unto itself*** corrects and completes the philosophy explained above, but does so by controverting it.

If the moral law can and should express itself thus; "Thou shalt always treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of another, as an end, and never use it as a means" — if this is the correct formula of the moral law, then I ask if humanity, or the moral personality, is not here placed before me as an *object* to be respected or to be perfected, either in myself or in others; as an *end* to be attained; in a word, to use Kant's phraseology, as *matter contrasted with form* — that is, as something which is distinguished from the *law* in itself, and which is the reason and ground for this law. Here we have something more than the pure universal form of willing: there is an *object* for our choice. There is something which is good in itself, an ideal to be attained and realized, apart from simple obedience to the law.

This implied contradiction in Kant has been seen and brought to light by numerous German critics, among others

by Schleiermacher, one of the most energetic opponents of the formalism of Kant.

"As to the accusations which Kant brings against other schools [he says], that they all make the moral law to rest upon something extraneous, this is unjust to many of them; and it may be retorted against Kant himself, although he fancies himself perfectly secure. In reality he attains this appearance (that of a purely formal philosopher) only by means of the equivocal nature of the expression *reasonable being*, which may mean two things — either a being who *possesses* reason as a *faculty*, and who is consequently able to make use of it; or a being who is practically guided by reason, and is *possessed by* it. Kant assumes that every creature that is reasonable in the former sense would also wish to be so in the latter, and his philosophy is drawn from the idea of the perfection of this reasonable being thus conceived. But how can this object to be attained be regarded as any thing else than an *object* of the will? I leave this to be decided by those who are wiser than I." [1]

Evidently Kant was led to adopt this theory of humanity as an end unto itself, by the necessity for furnishing the pure and abstract law of duty with a content, an object, i.e., some intrinsic reality. He is so far from seeing any contradiction between these two ideas that he even endeavors to deduce one from the other. From the first maxim; "Law commands only by its form, and not by its substance," he derives the other; "Humanity is an end unto itself." This is the conclusion of the subtle and complicated deduction by which

[1] Schleiermacher, *Grundlinien einer Kritik der bisherigen Sittenlehre.* (Berlin, 1846, p. 49, l. i., c. 1.) The formalism of Kant, which has been very little discussed in France because only its opposition to the doctrine of interest was observed, has been the object of numerous criticisms in Germany. (See Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, edit. Rosenkranz, t. xxv., p. 591; Trendelenburg, *Historische Beiträge*, t. iii., Berlin, 1867; Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, t. iii., p. 190, 2d edit.) The object of the moral philosophy of Schleiermacher, of Herbart, and Beneke, was to fill up the void left by this pure formalism. This formalism in Kant's moral philosophy has been justly connected with his metaphysical formalism. It is because he admits only *forms* in the theoretical understanding, that he has been led to see nothing but *forms* in the laws of the practical reason. In truth, if the objective part of things (that is to say, their essence) is utterly unknown to us, we cannot find in it the reason for our duties. We cannot tell what is the objective basis of duty, any more than we can know what is the foundation of our idea of causation or of space.

Kant endeavors to solve this strange problem; that is, he would derive substance from form; which, for all who understand the question, seems, *à priori*, to imply a contradiction.

The moral value of actions, as we have already seen, does not lie either in the action itself, or in the object of the action, but in the will which accompanies it. In fact, the very same action may be moral or immoral, according to the intention which produces it. To give money to some one, in order to assist him, is good; to give it to him in order to corrupt him, is bad. Hence it is the will, the will alone, which is good or bad. But on what conditions is a will good? On condition of obedience to a universal law, without any other aim or any other object than the law itself, that is to say, the law of duty: in other words, on condition of being guided only by the form, not by the substance. But, if the will ought not to seek any other aim than the law, does it not follow that this will cannot be employed as a means to attain an end, and consequently that it is itself an end, that it is sacred and inviolable for every other will as well as for itself? Thus the will, which was at first put before us as the *subject* of the action, becomes its *object:* thus the *form* of the law, the only principle of the morality, soon becomes its *substance.*

But who can fail to see the strange and subtle element in this transformation? The will is at first put before us simply as a power of action; it becomes good so far as it is obedient to a law; this law, by the hypothesis and by the definition, is a law destitute of any content or import, since all matter must be excluded from it! Now, how can the will to obey a law which is empty and wholly formal, introduce into this law the fulness which it lacks? To attempt to produce a real and concrete moral philosophy from one which is formal and purely mandatory, is an error like that of those political economists who fancy they can increase capital by increasing the paper which represents it. When Kant passes from the idea of a good will to the idea of humanity considered as an end unto itself, he does not, as he imagines, pass from one

thing to another similar one. Schleiermacher notes this in the remarks I have already quoted. Will, or the *power to act* according to reason, which is the *subject* of the law, is not identical with the reasonable will, which is its *object*. It is because we imagine a perfectly reasonable being, one in whom all passions would be subjected to reason, or even would not exist at all; it is because we can represent to ourselves an ideal humanity under these conditions, that we conceive it to be our duty to recognize that ideal; and it is in obeying the call of this duty that a real and concrete will is good. Such are the three elements of morality — an object to attain (the ideal humanity), a law which commands us to attain this object, a subject capable of obeying this law. If you suppress the first of these three elements, the two others are empty, and utterly destitute of any moral worth; and it would be impossible to produce the first from the other two.

All those who, following the example of Kant or of Fichte, attempt to deduce from the fact of liberty the law of liberty, fall into a delusion like that which I have just pointed out. They confound the two meanings of the word liberty — liberty as the power to act, and liberty as the ideal of action.

We may, indeed, admit that liberty in the latter sense, as the ideal state of man, as freedom from all passions, as pure reason always obeyed, may be regarded as the paramount good, and the highest reason for all morality; but how, then, can the theory of formalism be maintained? How can it be denied that the will really has an aim, an object, a substance of action? If, on the contrary, you understand by liberty, arbitrary liberty, or the power of choosing between opposites, how can the idea of a pure liberty, of an inviolable personality, of an ideal humanity, be deduced from it? What conclusion can be drawn from the fact that I am free to choose between two actions? "To be free, remain free," it has been said. But how could I help being free? Am I not just as free when I obey passion as when I obey reason? I lower myself, you say. It may be: but, then,

you are speaking of another liberty, of an enlightened liberty, of the liberty of reason; while the fact of arbitrary liberty is the simple naked fact of the possibility of choice. This very possibility, it will then be said, is just what constitutes my dignity, which I ought not to compromise. Granted; but how could this interior dignity be compromised by one action rather than by another, since both are equally free? Am I not just as free in doing what is called evil as in doing what is called good? Yes, undoubtedly, since I am equally responsible in both cases. Then, why should evil be any more contrary to my liberty than good? As to other men, how could I violate their liberty, since interior liberty, arbitrary liberty, is from its nature incapable of coercion, and, whatever I might do, I could never violate any one's liberty in that sense of the word? This proposition, "To be free, remain free," is, then, the same as saying; Use your arbitrary liberty to acquire the liberty of your reason.[1] The word *free* has not the same meaning in both cases: one cannot be deduced from the other. Here is not an analytical but a synthetical proposition.

To sum up, all the moralists who, like Kant and Fichte, have deduced from the fact of liberty the law of duty, and from the law of duty the idea of good, have inverted the true order of these ideas. Liberty, considered as the power of choosing, is not in itself superior to any other force of nature: it becomes noble only by obeying law. Law, in its turn, considered as an imperative, universal rule, is in no way superior to the brutal order of an arbitrary will, unless it is based upon the principle of good. Thus, it is the preexistence of good which gives legitimacy to the rule of duty; and it is this rule, in its turn, which, applied to liberty, gives to this dignity and beauty.

[1] The eminent author of an *Essay upon Liberty* (Daniel Stern) has distinguished the liberty "which we possess" from that "by which we wish to be possessed" (Preface, p. viii.). This distinction is a profound one. One is the power, the other is the aim: one is subjective, the other is objective.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXCELLENCE, OR OF PERFECTION.

WE have seen, in the two preceding chapters, that Utilitarianism and Kant's philosophy are both insufficient — the former, because it gives no rules, and thus destroys all morality; the second, because, while giving a rule, it is one which has neither motive nor reason, which commands and compels without saying why. There is, however, this difference between the two philosophies — that the first, that of pleasure, has no moral character whatever: while the second has indeed a moral character, and that the true one; but it is incomplete and mutilated.

Now, as it never happens that a system of philosophy is thoroughly consistent with itself, we have seen that the consciousness of this double deficiency has led each system to give tacit recognition, under another form, to the element which was at first disregarded in its pure theory. Thus, the school of pleasure, in making a distinction in pleasure between the *quality* and the *quantity*, has by this very act confessed the existence of a principle superior to pleasure. Thus, also, the school of abstract duty, in basing duty upon the *dignity* of the moral personality, and upon the *worth* of the man regarded as an *end unto himself*, destroys by implication its own theory of abstract duty which commands us by its *form*, and not by its *substance*, and makes all *objects* and all *ends* pure abstractions.

Thus, the philosophy of pleasure lays down a rule, but it does so by an unconscious abandonment of the philosophy of pleasure; and the school of purely formal duty gives an

object, an end, an aim to duty, without suspecting that in doing so it has left behind pure formalism.

Now, on the one hand, what these new Utilitarians call the quality of pleasure depends, even by their own admission, on the superiority of certain faculties over others; that is to say, on the dignity of human nature, which is at bottom the same as Kant's principle of humanity as *an end unto itself*. On the other hand, this dignity or excellence of human nature is, in its turn, so far as we possess it and are conscious of its possession, accompanied by the best and purest pleasure. We see thus that these two principles, introduced surreptitiously by the two schools into their formulas to complete and correct them, form, in reality, but one, which is, both in my opinion and in theirs, the true principle of all moral science, and which may be defined as being the identity of perfection and of happiness. In making clear this principle, which lies, unconsciously and dimly understood, at the root of the two rival theories, I am simply bringing to light the object which all philosophical traditions, from Socrates to Leibnitz, have always assigned to moral science.

Let us analyze this principle under both its aspects: the one, more metaphysical, perfection; the other, more psychological, happiness; the one more objective, the other more subjective; the one more ideal, the other more real; the one accessible to philosophers, the other to men in general — but which, in spite of these apparent and secondary differences, form at bottom one and the same principle, which is, the fulness of the human essence possessed and felt. Such is the idea of good which we are commanded to realize within ourselves; happiness being, as Spinoza most wisely said, not merely the recompense of virtue, but the very virtue itself.[1]

Malebranche has remarked that things are distinguishable

[1] For a complete exposition of this fundamental proposition, see B. iii., chap. xi.

from each other, not merely by their size or quantity, but also by their perfection or quality. Hence arises a double series of relations — those of quantity, which are the object of mathematics; those of perfection or excellence, which are the object of moral science.

"An animal [says Malebranche] is worth more than a stone, and less than a man, because there are wider relations of perfection in the animal as compared with the stone, than in the stone as compared with the animal, and narrower ones in the animal as compared with man, than in the man as compared with the animal. And he who perceives these relations of perfection, perceives truths which ought to regulate his esteem, and consequently the kind of love which is dependent upon esteem. But any one who esteems his horse more highly than his coachman, or who believes that a stone is in itself more estimable than a fly, . . . necessarily falls into error and confusion."

Not only do things or beings have certain comparative relations of excellence or of perfection, but, even in one and the same being, the different qualities of which he is composed also have relations of the same sort. Hence in man we prefer the soul to the body, the heart to the senses, reason to passion, etc. Thus here also there is a scale whose degrees should measure the degrees of our esteem, and consequently should govern our actions in conformity with this esteem.

Now, let us bear in mind that this scale of goods does not always correspond with the scale of pleasures. There must be, then, some internal and essential character by which we estimate and classify them. This character, by which we recognize one thing as being better than another, even although we may not like it so well, is what we call *perfection*.[1]

Now, what is perfection? and how can we tell that one thing is more perfect than another? If perfection is the criterion of good, what is the criterion of perfection?

[1] The principle of *perfection*, which reigned a long time, especially in the school of Leibnitz and Wolf, has been generally abandoned since the appearance of Kant's philosophy. To-day there is a tendency to return to it. See that solid work by M. Ferraz, *La Science du Devoir*, Paris, 1869.

We find this difficulty in every system. Every one ends at last with a final *because*, beyond which there is nothing. The partisans of pleasure do not escape this difficulty, if it is one.

"We cannot [says Mr. Mill] prove that any one thing is excellent, except by proving that it serves as a means for attaining another thing which is itself recognized as being excellent without any proof. The medical art is proved to be good by its conducing to health; but how is it possible to prove that health is good? The art of music is good, for the reason, among others, that it produces pleasure; but what proof is it possible to give that pleasure is good?"

For the same reason which leads Mr. Mill to admit without proof that health is good and that pleasure is good, I think that we must admit without proof that things are good, even independently of the pleasure which they give us, in themselves and by themselves, because of their intrinsic excellence. If any one were to demand that I should prove that thought is worth more than digestion, a tree more than a heap of stones, liberty than slavery, maternal love than luxury, I could only reply by asking him to demonstrate that the whole is greater than one of its parts. No sensible person denies, that in passing from the mineral kingdom to the vegetable kingdom, from this to the animal kingdom, from the animal to man, from the savage to the enlightened citizen of a free country, Nature has made a continual advance; that is to say, at each step she has gained in excellence and perfection.

Every one remembers this one of Pascal's "Thoughts:"—

"Man is a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed. . . . Even if the universe should crush him, he would be more *noble* than that which killed him: for he knows that he dies, and he recognizes the advantage which the universe has over him. The universe knows nothing of all this."[1]

[1] I follow the punctuation adopted by M. Havet: see *Pensées de Pascal*, art 1, t. i. p. 11.

Voltaire, in commenting on this, adds these words: "What does 'more noble' mean? . . . We are both judge and client." But it is not merely because we are both judge and client, that we regard that which thinks as more noble than that which does not think. Man, putting himself out of the question, does not hesitate to recognize a comparative value among things, and to consider as more noble each new attribute which is added to those anterior, and completes them. Thus, life is nobler than movement, pure and simple; feeling is nobler than vegetation; thought and activity are nobler than feeling; and, in general, to be is better than not to be. In proportion as the being grows in intensity he grows in perfection, and, by the same fact, even in happiness also: each of these degrees of growth is a step forward in dignity, in nobility, in excellence; all these terms are synonymous.

The Scotch philosopher, Hutcheson, who maintained the doctrine of the *moral sense*, recognized also another sense, which he called the sense of dignity,[1] and which he distinguished from the former. It is this sense, according to him, by which we recognize immediately the decency or the dignity of actions. In my view, the moral sense is identical with the sense of dignity.

While I admit that perfection, like every other primitive idea, is very difficult to define, it may, nevertheless, be explained and analyzed in such a way as to remove some of the indefiniteness which it has at first.

If, for instance, we consider the examples just mentioned, for which all men seem to have a sort of natural and instinctive valuation, we shall see that the excellence or the dignity of things is measured by the intensity or the development of their being; in a word, by their activity.

It is indubitable, that as between two beings, one of which is, or appears to be, inert, while the other is endowed with activity, we should naturally attribute more excellence to one than to another. Thus, we regard the animal as being

[1] Hutcheson, *System of Moral Philosophy*, B. i., c. ii., 6, 7.

superior to the vegetable, because he enjoys a more powerful and independent activity: thus, the oyster and the tortoise have become symbols of stupidity and of sluggishness, because of their immobility, or slowness of movement. Thus, waking appears to every one superior to sleeping; Aristotle expresses this feeling when he says that "the happy man is not he who sleeps, but he who wakes: and the gods themselves are happy only because they are in action; for apparently they are not always sleeping, like Endymion." For the same reason, the excellence or perfection of beings increases with the number of their attributes, because their activity increases in the same proportion.

But, if we attempt to consider the different attributes of one and the same being, by what standard shall we determine the degree of perfection or excellence which they may have? Always by the same principle. If activity (that is, the intensity of being) is indeed the essential principle of perfection, the greatest and most powerful activity will be the best. But the greatest activity is that which suffices most perfectly unto itself, which has the least need of exterior things in order to subsist; in a word, that which can draw the most from itself and its own resources. According to this, spontaneous activity is superior to that which is constrained: the movements of the feelings and passions are of higher value than the mechanical movements of inert matter. Moreover, the impulses of feeling are guided and produced by external objects: on the contrary, the activity of reason finds within itself all that is necessary for action; it is, then, truly independent; it is, then, the fullest and richest activity, and consequently is the best.

It is also a question among moral philosophers, whether some part of the emotions, that is, love, enthusiasm, courage, the source of noble feelings, may not be superior even to reason, since they cause us to live a more profound and noble life, and enable us to penetrate farther, and into higher mysteries than reason itself. In whatever way this problem may be

solved, one can rank reason above feeling, or feeling above reason, only by proving that one of these faculties gives greater intensity of being, and, therefore, more activity and more life; and if we admit what appears to be the true solution, that they are and ought to be inseparable, and that a reason without emotion, or an enthusiasm without reason, would be equally incomplete forms of human life, this also must be proved by showing that the activity of man, and consequently his power, is mutilated when reduced to pure reason or to exalted sensibility.

But if the principle of perfection is defined as the idea of activity or of power, how can we say with Pascal, that a reed which thinks is superior to the universe? How can it be said, that, if the universe should crush me, I would be nobler than that which killed me, because I should know that I was dying? In this case would not the universe be stronger than I? Would it not exhibit a greater activity, greater force, and would it not, consequently, according to this principle, be greatly superior to me?

If we reflect upon this difficulty, we shall see that an activ ity which is exerted without any consciousness of itself is the same as though it did not exist. For to whom would it be an activity? Not to itself, for it lacks consciousness; but only to the mind which contemplates and considers it. This is the reason why the profound metaphysicians of India have said that Nature exists only in so far as it is a thought, and is seen by the soul. She is like a dancer, they said poetically, who retires when she has been seen. If the universe were to crush man, it would thereby destroy the only reason for its own existence.[1] It would reduce itself to a sort of non-

[1] Let any one attempt to imagine the universe rolling through space in the absence or any thinking being, and having never found any consciousness in which to reflect itself under the form of science or of art, and he will feel convinced that such a mode of existence is not far removed from nothingness. If, within this immense and profound silence, a consciousness should appear, were it but for an instant, at that moment there would be life and being in the world, and the world itself would have lived for that moment only.

existence. True activity is conscious activity: if it lasted no longer than a flash of lightning, it would still be nobler than that which destroyed it; for, in that imperceptible instant, it recognized itself as activity; it took possession of its own being; and this the universe has never done.

We will, then, say with Spinoza, that perfection is life, that good or evil consists in the increase or the diminution of life. Every thing which increases our power we call good: every thing which diminishes it we call evil. Liberty, conscience, thought, increase our power and our life: blind and brutal passion, on the contrary, reduces us to slavery to things. There is, then, more good in a reasonable life than in one of passion.

These principles may be contested, if you say: You assume, without proof, that to be is better than not to be. This postulate has no value save what it borrows from man's instinctive and animal love for life. This instinct was transformed by Spinoza into a law in his celebrated axiom; "All life tends to persevere in life." From this law he derives the principle of his philosophy, which is, that every being ought to strive unceasingly to grow in life and in reality. But, on the contrary, a profounder philosophy teaches us that not to be is better than to be, that nothingness is superior to existence, and that annihilation, or Nirvâna, is the highest good. This is the doctrine taught by the greatest religion of the East, Buddhism: it is that of Schopenhauer, the misanthropic philosopher of Frankfort.

I have no answer to make to men who really and sincerely prefer non-existence to existence, and who regard annihilation as the greatest of all goods. But we have reason to believe that the doctrine of Nirvâna is only an exaggerated and hyperbolical form in which highly wrought and mystical minds express their contempt for apparent and fleeting existence, and their need of an absolute life. I do not think it by any means demonstrated, notwithstanding the assertions of Messrs. Eugène Burnouf, Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Max

Müller, etc., that Nirvâna means annihilation in the sense in which we understand that word. As to the Frankfort philosopher, it seems to me clear that he spoke only of a relative Nirvâna, not of an absolute one. Is not this the meaning of the concluding lines in his book?—

"What remains after the entire abolition of the will [he says] is doubtless, to those who are still full of will, a Nothing. But on the other hand, to those who have advanced so far that the will denies itself, it is our make-believe world, with all its suns and its milky ways, which is itself—a Nothing."[1]

In these lines I can see only an exaggerated expression of his philosophical contempt for the things of this world, not the systematic affirmation of an absolute *nothing*, considered as superior to being. But this is not the proper place in which to discuss the doctrine of Nirvâna. It is sufficient to remark, that the only logical consequence of this doctrine would be universal suicide,[2] which would make it quite useless to seek for any principle of morality.

The idea of perfection involves, not only the idea of activity, but also that of order, of harmony, of regular and proportionate relations. Suppose, for example, that the activities or forces of which the universe is composed were in a state of conflict or perpetual warfare, in such a way that every production would be immediately followed by a destruction, and that, from the conflict of these forces, there should proceed no fixed and stable existence, having a determinate essence, but every thing should be devoured by every thing, and all being should be lost in all being, in a perpetual and infinite flux and reflux: in such a universe, contemplated in some sort from the outside, we might, indeed, find force and power; but we should find there neither

[1] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille*, l. iv. end.

[2] Schopenhauer saw clearly that this was the legitimate consequence of his doctrine, but he endeavored to reject it. According to him, suicide is useless, and is no true annihilation, because the will continues to exist, and is eternal. But, as this persistence of the will is absolutely impersonal, what would it matter to the individual whether the will existed, or not?

beauty nor goodness. Perfection would be entirely lacking, at least all perfection which would be appreciable and intelligible to us. Hence, in order that activity may seem to us to be endowed with goodness and excellence, it is not enough that it should be a brutish activity, occupied in destroying as much as in producing, acting in void and emptiness: it must act with a certain degree of order, a certain regularity. To make its works seem good and beautiful, they must be intelligible, rational: it is this which at the same time renders them possible and durable. In short, in order that an object may exist and last, were it but for a second, it is essential that the various activities from which it results should be in accord for a moment, that they should, to a certain extent, agree; the different elements of which it is composed must be in equilibrium; a definable law must sustain them, and restrain them within certain limits of harmony. To use Plato's formula, the multitude must be brought to unity.

Thus, to the Aristotelian principle of action (*ἐνεργεία*) must be added the Platonic and Stoic principle of one in many (*τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ πόλλῶν*), of harmony, of agreement with itself, *consensus* (*ὁμολογία*). This second principle gives us the same scale as the first. The scale of beings is determined by this relation of the one and many, in precisely the same way as by the principle of activity.

In a mineral, for example, there is very little diversity, and very little unity. Little diversity, for the parts of a mineral are homogeneous: each bit of iron is iron, each bit of chalk is chalk. Little unity, for a mineral never forms an individual, but only a mass: it grows indefinitely by juxtaposition, and may be broken into as many particles as one pleases; the part is just as much a mineral as is the whole. In a plant we find at once more diversity and more unity than in the mineral. We find more diversity, for the parts of the plant differ one from another in structure and in function — root, stem, leaves, flowers, etc. — more unity, for a plant,

if cut in two, will not be two plants: a tree cut through the centre will not make two trees. Here there is already the beginning of individuality. Individuality is greater in the animal, first, because it is accompanied by consciousness; and second, because it is independent of its environment, and can transport itself from one place to another by spontaneous motion. Finally, this individuality is very much greater in man than in the animal, for in him it is not only felt, but is also reflected upon: man contemplates and thus knows himself. But at the same time that there exists in man a closer and profounder unity, there is also a diversity of phenomena far richer and more abundant than is found in any other creature; the passions have more objects; the imagination has an illimitable field; the ideas and affections, which are but a germ in the animal, are innumerable in man: he is a mirror of the universe; he is á microcosm.

Can we apply the same standard when, instead of measuring and comparing beings, we wish to compare and estimate the various faculties of one and the same being, or of the various goods which he is naturally led to seek after?

Let us consider the soul itself. Here we can distinguish what may be called three stages of life: in the first stage are what Bossuet calls the operations of sense (*opérations sensitives*) — that is, the senses, and the passions connected with them, imagination and memory, which are but the prolongation of sensation; above these, courage, the affections, enthusiasm, what Plato calls the θύμος and the ἔρως (courage and love); finally, in the third stage, thought and liberty, which constitute the moral personality.

Every one will agree in considering the life of the senses (the animal life, as Maine de Biran calls it) as inferior to the two others. Do you ask for proof? This life ordinarily consists entirely in folly and idiocy. But who would consent to become a fool or idiot on condition of enjoying all the pleasures of the senses, of preserving health, being rich, having concerts and castles, being surrounded by luxury, etc.? No

one would willingly accept such a destiny: a life of the severest labor would appear preferable, even to a voluptuary. Hence it is not pleasures alone which attract and captivate one: it is also, and still more, the possession of one's self, the consciousness of personality.

By this we see that the life of the senses themselves is worth nothing, has no value, even in the opinion of those who seek it, except in so far as it is united with consciousness, with memory, with intelligence; in a word, with some degree of personality. Now, consciousness, personality, is precisely that which gives some unity to the multiplicity of our sensations; by it the life of the senses in man becomes superior to the life of the animal: waking is superior to sleeping, reason to folly or idiocy, health to sickness. In what is called man's normal condition, there is more equilibrium, more unity, more agreement, and consequently more good, than in any abnormal state.

If even the life of the senses demands a certain unity, it may be said that the life of the heart and the life of the mind require much more; for this very reason each of these is better than the first.

All psychologists and moralists have observed, that by his senses man distracts himself; that he makes himself subordinate to exterior things, that he dissipates himself, and in a certain sense loses himself in the dust of his own phenomena. Hence comes the weariness which a life of dissipation generally leaves behind it: the man who has sacrificed every thing to the life of pleasure feels himself useless, eclipsed, and annihilated; he finds that in a sense he has lost himself; he has sacrificed the unity of his being to the multitude of his sensations. This is the idea which the apostle Paul expresses when he contrasts what he calls the *inner* man with the outer man, the spirit with the flesh.

This unity of the inner man should not be understood to mean a state of absolute *simplicity*, like that simplification of the soul (ἕνωσις), which is the illusion of the mystics; for

pure and absolute unity is something as indistinct and indefinite as absolute plurality. It is merely that union of the one and the many which constitutes good, or perfection. Perfection, then, will be *accord, harmony, just proportion.* Thus, he who lives the life of the mind, or of the heart, or of both at the same time, and who governs his passions and affections by reason, he, like a wise being, reconciles diversity with unity: he unceasingly augments the richness of his nature, while he subordinates it to that unity of direction which resides in thought.

It is under this aspect of a well-ordered republic that Plato, throughout his dialogues, shows us the beauty and the excellence of the human soul. Everywhere he sees goodness and beauty (τὸ καλοκάγαθὸν) in order and in harmony; that is to say, in the relation between one and several. All things good in nature result from the commingling of a mobile, inconsistent, undetermined part, and of a part which rules, measures, and contains the first. This is true of the movements of the stars, of the revolutions of the seasons: it is true in the body of health, and in the mind of wisdom. Wisdom is the health of the soul: both are an equilibrium, a harmony. The soul, if it would be happy and wise, must be kept in due order. Measure, from which grace is born, is the sign of a pure and upright soul: it is the condition of wisdom, as well as of music. The philosopher is a musician (ὁ σοφὸς μουσικὸς). The life of man needs number and harmony. The principle of perfection may, then, be resolved into the principle of accord, of harmony. Instead of tracing the beautiful to the good, as is generally done, it seems that it would be possible to trace the good to the beautiful.[1]

The German moralist Garve[2] dissented from the above

[1] This is one of the opinions held by the German philosopher Herbart, who regards moral philosophy as a part of æsthetics. M. Ravaisson, in his *Rapport sur la Philosophie du XIX^e^ Siècle*, seems to favor this idea. See, later (chap. vi.), how far I agree with, or dissent from, this point of view.

[2] Garve was a German philosopher of the eighteenth century, who had a great deal of good sense and sagacity. His *Versuche über verschiedene Gegen-*

definition of perfection — that is, "the reduction of plurality to unity" — a definition received in the school of Wolf.[1] He regards this as an insufficient criterion. "For in what condition of man is not the whole brought into a certain unity? Even in the absolutely vicious man every thing agrees, in order to make of him a perfectly vicious being." Thus, in the egotist, every thing arises from the unity of his self-love; and in the voluptuous man every thing arises from the unity of his voluptuousness. It is therefore necessary to explain why it is that in man the sensitive should lead him to the rational, and not the rational to the sensitive, — in saying which you assume that reason is of an order superior to that of the senses, and leave the idea of perfection or excellence as vague as it was before.[2] But it is not true that the egotist, the avaricious man, or, to speak in general terms, any of those who abandon themselves to the sway of one passion, can claim to possess true unity. One point in the circumference is not the unity of the circle: this unity is at the centre. In the same way, the true unity of human nature is at the centre; that is to say, at the point from which all the human faculties radiate, and to which all are co-ordinated. He who gives himself up to all his passions scatters himself over an

stände aus der Moral, der Litteratur und dem geselligen Leben deserves to be read even now.

[1] Leibnitz himself defines perfection, *Identitas in varietate.* (See his correspondence with Wolf.) He said, again, that perfection is "a degree of positive reality, or, what is practically the same thing, of affirmative intelligibility (*intelligibilitatis affirmativæ*), of such a nature that that is the most perfect in which are manifest the greatest number of things which are worthy of notice." Wolf objected, "Are there any more things to be seen in a healthy body than in a diseased one?" — "Yes," replied Leibnitz: "if every one were sick, many beautiful observations would come to an end; that is, all which relate to the natural course of things. . . . The more order there is, the more matter for observation there is. . . . If there were no rules, every thing would be pure chaos. Hence it may be said, that the perfect thing is that which is most regular (*quod magis est regulare*). . . . It is the multitude of regularities which produces variety. Thus uniformity and diversity agree." Leibnitz concludes with these words: "Thus the perfection of an object is greater in proportion as it contains a more perfect accord between a greater variety."

[2] *Uebersicht der Principien der Sittenlehre*, c. viii.

infinite number of objects: he who gives himself up to one does indeed concentrate himself, but he concentrates himself outside of himself; that is, outside of his centre, on one of the points of his circumference. Even the egotist does not, as it is claimed, concentrate himself upon himself; for in himself he would find something other than himself: he concentrates himself upon that secondary and subordinate self which is composed of the sensations, and he ignores that interior and profound self in which the affections and ideas reside.

The preceding analyses give us, then, a double idea of perfection: First, the idea of an activity, more or less intense, whose excellence is in proportion to its intensity: Second, the idea of harmony, or of the agreement of the elements or parts of which the being is composed, or of unity in plurality. Combining these two ideas, we should say that the good of a being consists in the harmonious development of its faculties. Imagine a being which should develop within itself only certain inferior faculties; in establishing such a degree of order among them that they would not mutually destroy each other, he would attain a certain good, but it would be an inferior one: such is common prudence. Suppose that one should develop to their highest extent some of his most noble faculties, but not bring them into harmony with others: he would attain a good of a superior order; but, by the mutilation of his being, this good would frequently be transformed into evil; this is the case with atheists, with enthusiasts and fanatics. Suppose that one should develop all his superior faculties, while utterly sacrificing the inferior: one would thus attain a good which would be the true, essential good — good in itself. But as this would be done outside of the real and concrete conditions of human nature, either it could not long be maintained, or the man would destroy himself, which is directly contrary to the idea of good. We must, then, take into account both the principle which commands us to develop within ourselves, so far as

possible, the forces at our disposal, and also of that which requires us to establish among them a harmony and an equilibrium without which their activity would be sterile or destructive, and would consequently annihilate itself.

Perhaps this analysis will be considered extremely abstract, and an effort will be made to trace the conception of perfection to some more concrete and comprehensible idea, saying, for example, Perfection is mind; that is, what is spiritual, either in man or in nature — perfection is will, and it is the highest degree of will; that is, liberty — perfection is generosity; that is, prodigality and disinterestedness, and other similar definitions. But in this way two different questions are confounded: on one hand, What being is perfect? on the other, What is it to be perfect? I grant that the most perfect of things are mind, liberty, generosity. But in what does the perfection of these different objects consist, and why are they more perfect than their opposites? Why is mind worth more than matter, will than fatality, generosity than egotism? To this question only two answers can be given: either we perceive intuitively and by a special sense the quality of things, and we have a right to affirm without proof that one object is worth more than another, in which case the perfection of mind or of liberty, or of generosity, would be a simple and indefinable quality, which could not be traced back to any other; or, if this simple quality is not satisfactory, it would be necessary to resolve the conception of perfection into two elements, as I have done — the intensity of the being, and the co-ordination of its powers. Why is it, indeed, that the mind appears to us to be the most perfect thing in existence? It is because we suppose it gifted with a spontaneous activity which matter does not possess, and because we place within it the reason for the order which matter displays. Why do will and liberty appear to us the best of all things? Because there is no higher degree of power than that of being able to move one's self; yet it is essential that this

movement should be made in a certain direction, in a certain order. Finally, generosity itself is also a kind of power, for it presupposes abundance and expansion; but if it is exercised by chance, and without consideration, it is of no more value than its opposite. Thus these various definitions will at last all return to the most abstract characteristics which I have noticed.

It would also be a misapprehension of the conception of perfection, if there should be seen in it only an ideal and absolute type toward which we ought to tend, but which, precisely because it is absolute, seems beyond our reach, and inaccessible to our efforts. If perfection is thus understood, one may well ask in what it consists, and what is the substance of this idea. This is the defect in that celebrated principle — true, nevertheless, in a certain point of view, but too indefinite — of the imitation of God, or conformity to God. I ought to imitate God, you tell me; but what is God? what are his attributes? what are his acts? How can I imitate God in the temporal actions which are the condition of my life? How can a merchant imitate God in buying or selling? How can a soldier imitate God while bravely killing his enemies? The only possible way in which man can imitate God is by cultivating, developing, and making the most of the faculties which God has given him. These faculties have a proper and essential perfection; and, taken all together in their order of excellence, they constitute human perfection. This is the only one which is within our reach: this is what we can develop. Doubtless, as we shall soon see,[1] we cannot attribute to ourselves in our thoughts any perfection without having the idea of an absolute perfection. But we do not begin with this absolute perfection, and from it lay hold of and comprehend the human: on the contrary, we begin with the latter, and from it rise to the former.

Hence it is not perfection in general which is the good for

[1] See farther on, chap. vi.

which we are to seek: it is our own perfection — that is, the perfection, not of the individual, but of the man; it is human perfection, the perfection of our faculties, which, not being limited by its essence, can always be carried on farther, so that at the end of this progress we may conceive an ideal man (the wise man of the Stoics), who shall be at once a man and yet perfect: a contradictory notion, if you will, but one which we may accept as the symbol and the formula of that which ought to be, although it never can be.

Thus Aristotle was right when he uttered that profound saying, that the good of a being should be sought, not in a universal and absolute essence, strange to him, and in no relation to him, which does not at all concern us, but in the *act proper to* human nature (*οἰκεῖον ἔργον*).

"How would it help a carpenter in the exercise of his trade," he says acutely, "to contemplate abstract good?" So, too, human good or the good of man should be a good which is definite and suitable for man; for no being can be required to seek for a good which is not adapted to his nature. Plato himself had already admitted that the virtue of a being consists in doing well what is suitable for it: the virtue of the horse is in running well, that of the eye in seeing well. Aristotle, examining this principle, saw, that to determine what forms the good of a being, it is necessary, first, to determine the *activity proper to it;* that is, its essence. For that which is good for one animal would not be so for another: that which would be good for animals in general would not be so for man. Thus, as Spinoza says, we admire in animals what we condemn in men, as, for example, the combats of ants. When the relative excellence of different classes of beings is compared, it is undoubtedly measured by their degree of activity and harmony; but when we seek to find the true and absolute excellence of each class of beings, this is measured by their suitable and essential activity. What, then, is the activity suitable to man? Is it life? No: this he has in common with the plant and the animal. Is it

feeling? No; for this also he has in common with the animal. "It follows," says Aristotle, "that it must be the active life of a being endowed with reason, or a reasonable activity."

To the same principle must be imputed the doctrine of Spinoza, that the good of man consists in the development of adequate ideas. In fact, adequate or general ideas, are the ideas by which the soul comprehends itself in uniting itself to its true cause, which is God. In giving itself up to inadequate ideas, that is, to those of nature and the senses, the soul turns away from its true essence; it comprehends itself less and less; it loses itself in that which is not itself. What is this self, properly speaking? An idea of God's. Then, the nearer it approaches God, the better it will understand itself: now it is by general ideas that it approaches God, and, consequently, that it possesses itself; and it is in this sense that the imitation of God makes a part of the action which is proper to us, and may become a rule of action.

From the same principle is derived the formula of Kant and of Fichte, which makes respect for and development of the human personality the fundamental principle of morals. If we say with Aristotle, that the essence of man is reasonable activity, is not this the same as saying that it is personality? For what is activity united with reason? A being who acts or can act according to reason is a free being: he is a *person*. From this it follows that the true essence, and therefore the true end, of man, is personality; and that the highest degree of excellence which man can attain is at the same time the highest degree of personality. Hence comes the strange and energetic language of Fichte's philosophy: "Assert self as itself, setting aside every thing that is not its true self;" that is to say, assert one's proper self, free one's self from nature, and subordinate nature to the Ego. Hence also that principle of Fichte's, that the object of moral philosophy is to insure us the greatest independence, the most entire personal liberty; not that this maxim is to be under-

stood as meaning a liberation from all restraint, but, on the contrary, as a deliverance from all passion.

Rightly occupied with combating the doctrine of personal interest, modern philosophers have too often forgotten that *good* in general cannot be an end for us except on condition of being *our* good; for it is inadmissible that a being should be held to any thing for the sake of a good which would be wholly foreign to him. For example, is it the duty of an animal to seek the good of human society? What does it matter to the horse whether humanity is, or is not, happy? Or can we imagine, for example, that it could be our duty to strive to give happiness to angels, except in so far as we suppose that angels and men form a common society, and have consequently a common good? This is why I owe my service to the good of humanity — because the good of other men is my own good: it is because what is good for the hive is good for the bee. For this reason one may also say with St. Augustine and all Christians, that the highest good is God himself; because, as we shall see, the human soul being made to lift itself to the infinite and the perfect, absolute good, good in itself, is at the same time its own good. Thus Aristotle, after having disputed Plato's theory that the idea of good is the good in itself, because, according to him, good is an act proper to the soul, returns in a roundabout way to the theory which he has opposed, making paramount good to consist in the most elevated action of the soul, that is, in the contemplation of the divine; and to those who criticised him he replied, "It is suitable that mortals should participate, so far as they can do so, in immortal things." Thus by the doctrine of a proper and essential perfection, that is to say, of a human good, man is not limited to himself. It separates him, as we have seen, neither from other men, nor from nature, nor from God; for it is the very essence of man that he should be united with God, with nature, and humanity.

The preceding considerations are, I think, an answer to

the objections which Kant thought he saw to the conception of perfection. He combated this principle on the ground that perfection is an object exterior to ourselves, and, as he said, a *heteronomous* principle. But, according to what has been said, the good of a being does not consist in perfection in general, but in its own perfection. The perfection which should be the ideal model for man is not, then, something which is entirely foreign to him: it is his own essence.[1]

The principle of proper and essential perfection (*οἰκεῖον ἔργον*) gives us also a rule by which we may estimate the value of the different goods which present themselves for man's choice, and forces us to distinguish relative and provisionary goods from those which are absolute, apparent goods from those which are real. Of the three kinds of goods recognized by the ancients — exterior goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul — the first are worthless, save as means for procuring the second; and these are worthless, save as auxiliaries to the goods of the soul; so that, properly speaking, the last alone deserve the name of goods, since they alone are sought for their own sakes; while the others are sought only for the sake of the last. Exterior things have, in truth, no absolute and proper perfection, and have merely a relative value, that which they derive from their adaptation to our needs. From a purely physical point of view, gold has no intrinsic perfection superior to that of leather; and, in a desert, a sum of money sufficient to purchase the title to a whole country would be worth very much less than a glass of water. The miser himself does not love his gold for its own sake, but for the pleasure which he finds in it. Again, what use would exterior things be to one

[1] It cannot be claimed that this is a utilitarian principle, since here the species, not the individual, is in question. Being born a man, I ought to try to be a man so far as is possible: to do this, I must often struggle within myself with all which is of exclusively individual interest. Again, the individual himself has a distinctive essence which he should respect. An ordinary man may be permitted to do some things which a Cato ought not to allow himself to do, because he is Cato.

whose health would not permit him to enjoy them? I may say the same of the goods of the body: their value consists only in the pleasure which they give us; that is to say, in that which already belongs to the soul. It is not the body itself which interests us, but its sensations. Would any one be greatly delighted by the thought that after death his body would be embalmed, and preserved indefinitely? Is it not clear that this prospect would interest us as little as if the body of some other man were concerned? Consciousness having disappeared, my body is no longer my body; that which interests me, then, is not my body, but my conscious and sentient body; but consciousness and sensation belong to the soul. Thus all comes back to the goods of the soul. Finally, the goods of the senses are worthless, save as the condition of intellectual goods and those of the heart; for these alone are the goods proper to man, and belonging to his essence, the others being held by him in common with animals. Hence, he who wishes to be a man, and not an animal, should prefer the second to the first.

We can now understand why the Stoics regarded exterior goods and those of the body as *indifferent*. These goods are never any thing but *means*, and should not be regarded as *ends*. They are only *relative* goods, not *absolute* ones. They cannot be sought for their own sake, but only for that of the soul, to whose functions they are indispensable. From this fact they undoubtedly acquire a real value, but it is one which is subordinate and provisionary. True goods are those which are essential to our being, which cannot forsake us when once we have acquired them: they are the *interior* goods, which are not at the mercy of circumstances and accidents. It is this natural and essential good of the soul which, when sought and realized by the will, becomes moral good: "*Bonum mentis naturale*," says Leibnitz, "*quum est voluntarium, fit bonum morale.*"[1]

The principle of human personality, the basis of Kant's

[1] Leibnitz, *Correspondence with Wolf.*

philosophy, has in it nothing which conflicts with the principle of perfection, but, on the contrary, it presupposes this; for, as man is an animal at the same time that he is a person, there seems to be no reason why he should be required to prefer the personality to the animalism, unless it is because the personality is the best, the most excellent, the most perfect, thing within him. Does not Kant himself admit this when he attributes to the human personality an intrinsic worth, an absolute value; when he demands that this personality shall never be either humiliated or sacrificed? Cannot every one see that these expressions, *worth*, *value*, which he is constantly using, are exactly equivalent to those of *perfection*, and *excellence*, which are employed by the school of Wolf? If the moral personality had not an excellence superior to that of the desires and the appetites, why should the latter be sacrificed to it? Thus, whether consciously or unconsciously, the moralists always have before their eyes the conception of perfection. What, indeed, would be the aim of morals if not to make us more perfect?

Finally, many attempts have been made to reduce perfection, and thus good itself, to the idea of the end or the aim. "Good," says Aristotle, "is the final cause (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα): it is what all desire (οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται)." A philosopher of our own day, Théodore Jouffroy, makes good consist in the coordination of all ends. Undoubtedly good and perfection are ends for man. But, strictly speaking, it would be more exact to define the end as being the good, than the good as being the end. It is because there exists some object which is better, more excellent, more perfect, than those which we now actually enjoy, that we tend toward that object as toward an end. It is, then, the intrinsic perfection of the object which is the reason for its existence, or the basis of the ultimate cause. If this essential perfection is reduced to an abstraction, then nothing remains for an aim and an object of pursuit but pleasure. Will you say, to escape from this conclusion, that the end of our actions is that which has been

fixed by the Author of things? It must, then, be asked whether this end was fixed arbitrarily, in which case we fall into the doctrine of *absolute decrees;* or whether, on the contrary, this end fixed by God was already good in itself, in which case there would be a goodness and excellence anterior to the idea of the end, and existing by itself. Finally, if the end or the aim of a being is defined as being that which results from the very nature of that being, what are we to understand by nature? In man, for instance, passions and disorderly pleasures make a part of his nature; and, in general, every thing which is, is in conformity with nature, otherwise it would not exist. If, on the other hand, we are to understand by nature, as the Stoics do, the most excellent part of our being, we shall then see that it is this very excellence which is an end and an object for us. Thus we must always return to the supposition, that, in the diverse ends of our actions, there exist some intrinsic reasons for choice and preference — reasons which constitute the perfection and the excellence of the things, and consequently constitute good. This is the good which we call *natural* so far as it results from nature, and *moral* so far as it results from the will

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HAPPINESS.

MODERN philosophers, in proving that pleasure is not the good, imagine that they have solved all the difficulties in their path; but it may be said that they have considered only one side of the subject, and that, from this point of view, the ancients saw farther than they: for, after proving that pleasure is not *the* good, there still remains the question whether pleasure is not *a* good, and even whether it may not be an essential part of the good. This is the opinion held by Plato and Aristotle. Each of them has proved, as clearly as we have done, that pleasure in general is not the good; for, were it so, all pleasures would be good, and all would be equally desirable, which is not the case. But, while there are evil and impure pleasures, there are others which are good and excellent; and, although we cannot say of pleasure that it is the good, it does not follow that good can be separated from pleasure. Thus in the *Philebus*, Plato, while refuting the voluptuous philosophy of the sophists, declares that the idea of good is composed of two inseparable elements — wisdom and pleasure. "Perhaps it is different in the life of the gods," he says; "but as to human life, it cannot be entirely deprived of pleasure." Thus, while subordinating pleasure to wisdom, Plato makes the idea of it enter into that of the supreme good: only he makes a choice among pleasures, and admits only those which are pure, simple, noble, and elevated. Aristotle is still more explicit. Plato, indeed, introduces pleasure into good only from necessity, and rather regretfully: by his general theory of

pleasure he would rather have been inclined to exclude it absolutely from a wise and happy life. Aristotle, on the contrary, regards pleasure as being essentially a good, because it is connected with the development of our being, and is the actual consequence of action.

"Pleasure [he says] finishes and completes the action. . . . It is an end which joins itself with the other qualities as bloom is joined with youth. — Why is not pleasure continual? Because none of the human faculties are capable of continual action: now pleasure has not this power any more than the others, for it is only the consequence of action. It is probable, that, if all men love pleasure, it is because all love life also; for life is a sort of act."[1]

Thus pleasure is a result inseparable from the action of our faculties. From this principle Aristotle draws two important conclusions — first, that pleasures are specifically different; second, that pleasures are mutually related in the same way with acts; it is the act which measures the pleasure, not the pleasure which measures the act.

1. Pleasures differ in *kind*, and not merely in *degree*.

"Acts which are specifically different [he says] cannot but be accompanied by pleasures which differ in kind. Thus the acts of thought differ from the acts of the senses, and the latter also differ from each other: hence pleasures should also differ. . . . For each different act, there is a corresponding suitable pleasure: the pleasure which belongs to a virtuous action is an honorable pleasure; that which belongs to an evil action is a guilty pleasure. . . . It seems even as though each animal had a pleasure which belongs to no other, just as he has a special kind of action. The pleasure of a dog is entirely different from that of a horse or of a man."

2. Aristotle is not satisfied with merely establishing the fact of the specific nature of pleasure. He also estimates its quality and worth by the quality of the acts themselves.

"The best act [he says] is that of the being who is the best disposed toward the most perfect object. And this act is not simply the most

[1] *Ethic. Nic.*, l. x., c. iv., v. In regard to the theory of pleasure, consult the interesting work by M. Fr. Bouillier, *Du Plaisir et de la Douleur*. Paris, 1865.

complete, it is also the most agreeable. . . . The true and genuine quality of things is that which the well-endowed man finds within them: virtue is the true measure for all things. The man who is good, so far as he is so, is the sole judge: true pleasures are those which he regards as such. . . . The pleasures of the degraded are not pleasures."

Kant saw fit to contest the principle of a *specific* difference between pleasures. He declares that there are not two kinds of sensibility, one of which is superior, the other inferior: both have the same origin, which is the *vital sense*. All pleasures are identical in essence, whatever may be their source; and the enjoyment of a good dinner has in it nothing intrinsically different from that of fine music, or of a good action performed through sympathy, and not from a sense of duty. Kant, indeed, admits that some pleasures are more refined than others; but he regards this as being simply a difference of degree, and, moreover, as merely a matter of *taste*, not affecting the *moral sense*. The only argument which he gives in defence of this theory is, that there must be a standard of measurement common to the most widely differing pleasures. For example, if one refuses to give money to a poor person whom he is in the habit of assisting, so that he may save it to pay for seeing some show, he must have compared these two pleasures with each other, and have given the preference to that which seemed to him the greater. But I do not see what conclusion can be drawn from this example. For, if we sacrifice duty to pleasure, we also compare these with each other; and, according to the reasoning above, we should conclude that the two are of the same nature. If, on the contrary, we say, in agreement with Kant's theory, that the conflict between duty and pleasure and the preference of one to the other is no indication of a common essence, I do not see why the conflict between the two feelings, one superior, the other inferior, and the preference of one to the other, should destroy the fundamental difference which separates them. Moreover, even if we grant that the faculty of enjoyment or of suffering, in so far

as it is the faculty of enjoyment or of suffering, is essentially the same under all its manifestations, it would not follow that it might not receive different characters from its union with our other faculties; for example, if reason, or the faculty of thinking, is superior to nutrition, I do not see why the pleasure belonging to one should not be regarded as superior to that which accompanies the other. To say that one should not take into account the origin of pleasures is an entirely arbitrary thesis, for which no reason is given. Hence, the Aristotelian theory of the *specific character* of pleasures, seems to me to be superior philosophically to Kant's theory of the *homogeneousness* of pleasures. The consequences resulting from one theory or the other are of the very greatest importance.

If pleasure always accompanies action, if each function has its own peculiar pleasure, it follows plainly that every development of our activity, consequently every development of perfection in man, is accompanied by pleasure, whether we wish it or not. Nature, not troubling herself to inquire whether it will suit abstract philosophies, has decreed that each of our faculties, the highest as well as the lowest, shall have its own peculiar pleasure by the very fact of being exercised. Hence the perfection of being cannot be acquired without gaining also the feeling of this perfection, the joy of possessing it. Now, this feeling, this joy, is what we should call *happiness*, inseparable, as we have seen, from perfection itself.[1] Good, then, is indissolubly composed of perfection and of happiness.

Kant, instead of uniting these two ideas, has, on the contrary, separated them, and set them in mutual opposition. In his *Philosophy of Virtue*, he ascribes to virtue two distinct and irreducible objects — the perfection of one's self and the happiness of others.

[1] Leibnitz, *Nouveaux Essais*, 1, ii., c. xxi. "Pleasure is the feeling of perfection." . . . "Happiness is a durable pleasure."

"We must not [he says] interchange these two terms, and propose to ourselves as an end either *personal happiness*, or the *perfection of others*. In truth, although personal happiness is an end which all men pursue by reason of their natural inclinations, we cannot consider this end as a duty; for duty implies a constraint to something not voluntarily done. It is equally contradictory to take for an end the perfection of another. In fact, the perfection of another consists precisely in his being himself capable of acting conformably to his idea of duty. Now, it is a contradiction of terms to say that I may do in regard to another what he alone can do." [1]

This opposition of perfection and happiness is certainly true in the sense in which Kant here expresses it; for by happiness he means only pleasure, and in general, the satisfaction of the sensibility; and by moral perfection he means virtue. Now, it is quite right to say that the end of my actions is neither my own pleasure, nor the virtue of another. If, on the contrary, we understand by happiness, not pleasure in general, but, like Aristotle, Descartes, and Leibnitz, regard it as the feeling of our own perfection and excellence, it is clear that it may be an end for us. For why should it not be an end to seek our own perfection? and how, if we have attained it, could we help enjoying it?

Undoubtedly, also, we cannot desire as the end of our actions the virtue of another: no one can be virtuous save for himself. But if I cannot take for my end the virtue of other men, what I can and should do is, to furnish them an occasion for becoming virtuous, and procure for them the substance of virtue. To give a man good counsel, a good education, a good example, is to strive for his perfection by furnishing him with the conditions of virtue, without being virtuous in his place: and even to alleviate the misery of our fellow-creatures, to comfort them, to assist them with our money or with our friendship, is also to assist toward their perfection by promoting their happiness; for the means of action which I thus put into their hands are for them the conditions of the development of their faculties, and stimulants

[1] Kant, *Tugendlehre*, Introduction.

to this. The two ideas of perfection and happiness, far from being, as Kant considered them, in mutual opposition, are, then, really but one and the same idea, considered under two different aspects.

In modern philosophy the doctrine of happiness and the doctrine of pleasure are generally confounded, and it is supposed that one is done away with when the other is refuted. But, if this were true, it would be hard to see why the noblest and purest schools have not hesitated to make happiness the end of our actions, and frequently to confound happiness and virtue. The doctrine of happiness is in a certain sense favored by philosophic tradition. Socrates regarded happiness (εὐπραξία) as the greatest good of mankind (τὸ κράτιστον ἐπιτήδευμα). But he distinguished it from good fortune (εὐτυχία), and made it consist in *right action* (ἐν ποιεῖν).[1] Plato teaches the same. He sets in opposition, and at the same time rejects, the two systems which make good consist either in wisdom alone or in pleasure alone; and he places it in the union of these two elements. According to him, virtue is the health of the soul, and vice its sickness; one is our good, the other is our evil; and punishment is the remedy which re-establishes the soul in its natural state. Doubtless it is from this identity of virtue and happiness that Plato derives his theory that vice is involuntary; for, he says, no one will voluntary seek his evil; no one will voluntarily reject his good. Between two goods, no one will voluntarily choose the lesser.[2] As to Aristotle, it is needless to remark that he regards happiness as the supreme good. This is the first and the last word of his philosophy.[3] Let us pass to St. Augustine: "We all wish to live in happiness," he says.[4] The supreme good is God, and the supreme happiness is to possess God. "*Consecutio Dei ipsa beati-*

[1] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, iii., ix., 14. [2] *Protagoras*, 358.

[3] *Eth. Nic.* I., 1094, a. 3. Τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ αἱρετον . . . τοιοῦτον δ'εὐδαιμονία.

[4] *De Moribus Eccles. Cath.*, c. iii., 4. "*Beati certè omnes vivere volumus. Restat . . . ubi beata vita inveniri potest.*"

tas."[1] To seek God is to seek happiness: "*Cum te Deum meum quæro, vitam beatam quæro.*"[2] St. Thomas teaches the same doctrine. For after having said that the ultimate end is God, "*finis ultimus Deus*,"[3] he examines the nature of happiness, and, after reproducing in part the philosophy of Aristotle,[4] he concludes, in conformity with Christian ideas, that "happiness consists in the vision of the divine essence."[5] In the seventeenth century, the four great masters of philosophy — Descartes, Malebranche, Leibnitz, and Spinoza — all maintain the theory of the identity of happiness and good. Listen to the words of Descartes — words which express with absolute exactitude my own theory:

"The supreme good [he says] consists in the exercise of virtue, or, what amounts to the same thing, *in the possession of all the perfections* whose acquisition depends upon our own free will. Felicity is the mental satisfaction which follows this acquisition."

He makes nearly the same distinction as does Socrates between "happiness and beatitude"[6] — happiness being dependent on exterior things, while beatitude, on the contrary, depends upon our own faculties. "Beatitude is not the supreme good, but it presupposes its presence."[7] He affirms that each may be regarded as the end of our actions: "for the supreme good is undoubtedly the aim which we should present to ourselves in all our actions; and the contentment of mind which follows it, being the attraction which led us to seek it, may also rightfully be called our end." Finally, he lays down the same principle as Aristotle; that is, that "each pleasure should be measured by the greatness of the perfection which it produces."[8]

But we often deceive ourselves in this search. "Passion makes us believe that certain things are better and more

[1] *De Moribus Eccles. Cath.*, xiii., 22, 23. [2] *Confessions*, xx., 29.
[3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theol., prima secundæ*, quæst. i., art. 8.
[4] Ibid., quæst. ii., iii., iv., v. [5] Ibid., quæst. iii., art. viii.
[6] *Descartes*, ed. Cousin, t. ix., p. 211. [7] Ibid., p. 219. [8] Ibid., p. 226.

desirable than they really are," and "the true office of reason is to determine the real value of all goods."[1] These solid and sensible maxims are the basis of true philosophy. Malebranche, in his turn, makes the supreme good consist in the love of order, and does not distinguish it from happiness. Happiness is not the *end* of our desires, but it is their *motive*. Take away the pleasure which we derive from the love of order, the love of God, and should we then love order, should we love God? We are not forbidden to strive to be happy, since self-love is essential to us: we are forbidden to seek for our happiness within ourselves. Charity, as St. Augustine expresses it, is a *holy concupiscence*.[2] Leibnitz and Spinoza taught similar doctrines. According to the latter; "Beatitude is not the reward of virtue: it is virtue itself."[3] Leibnitz, for his part, teaches "that a consideration of *true happiness* would suffice to make us prefer virtue to voluptuousness;" . . . and he distinguishes "the *luminous* pleasures which perfect us, without bringing to us any danger of falling into some greater imperfection, as do the *confused* pleasures of the senses."[4]

Again, listen to the practical moralists, the preachers and wise men of all ages. They unceasingly commend to us true goods in preference to apparent and false goods. They show us that happiness lies in wisdom, in innocent joys, in the cultivation of the noble faculties of the soul. They paint for us the happiness of domestic life, the great joys of a public life devoted to the happiness of mankind, or of a religious life consecrated to the worship of God: they pity and deplore the false pleasures of libertines and ambitious men.

The truth is, that there are two kinds of happiness — one purely relative, since it depends on the state of the individual organs and development; the other absolute, since it

[1] *Descartes*, ed. Cousin, t. ix., p. 226. [2] Malebranche, *Morale*, ch. xv.
[3] *Ethics*, l. v., prop. xlii.
[4] Leibnitz, *Nouveaux Essais*, l. ii., c. xxi. Also, and above all, see the important passages which I have quoted farther on, chap. v., p. 90.

rests upon the essential and intrinsic value of the human faculties. One is outside of discussion, for we cannot dispute about tastes: the other, on the contrary, is one which forces itself, or which at least may force itself, as a supersensible object, upon every one who attempts to find his happiness elsewhere, where it does not really lie. Accepting the theory of pleasure, you can make no reply to him who says, "Let each take his pleasure wherever he finds it." But, accepting the true theory of happiness, you can say, You *ought* not to be happy in this way, because it is not the happiness of a man, but of a child, of a slave, or of an animal: you *ought* to be happy in the way that is suitable to your own nature.[1]

The mistake of the Utilitarians does not consist in their having proposed happiness as the end of human actions, but in their adoption of an erroneous definition of happiness.

Happiness is not, as Bentham claims, the greatest possible sum of pleasure: it is the highest possible state of excellence, from whence results the most excellent pleasure. There is, then, a true and a false happiness, there are true goods and false goods; and man may be required to choose the one in preference to the other. Thus the theory of happiness furnishes a rule which is not found in that of pleasure, and one may agree with the former without accepting the latter.

That in the idea of happiness, as in the idea of good, there is an essential and absolute element which cannot be measured by the feeling of the individual, is shown by the opinions expressed by men under many circumstances. Take, for example, an insane person, who has a bright and cheerful mania, and who, having no consciousness of his infirmity,

[1] Kant himself, in his analysis of the judgment of taste (*Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, l. i., v. 8 and 9), clearly demonstrated that there are certain pleasures, for example that of the beautiful, which we feel that we have a right to require of other men in a necessary and universal way. Undoubtedly a man may be an utter stranger to the feeling for the beautiful, as he may be also to the moral sentiment. But, if he undertakes to judge and enjoy the beautiful, he *ought* to find pleasure in *Athalie* and in the *Parthenon:* otherwise we regard him as incompetent, and, if he persists, as absurd. The same is true of moral pleasure.

considers himself the happiest of men. Do we agree with him? Do we consider him truly happy? Evidently we do not, for we would not be willing to exchange lots with him: no one would desire such a happiness, either for himself or for his friends, or for his relatives. We should not desire it, even if we could be certain of losing all consciousness of our actual condition, nor even if we could be unconscious of passing from one state into the other. Thus we judge that the state of reason (in spite of all the trials by which it may be accompanied) is a better and happier state than that of madness, even should this be the most agreeable and delightful to the feelings. It is because the state of reason is the normal state of man, that which is suited to his nature, and that true happiness should be that which results from our true nature. We do not desire to become lunatics any more than to become beasts; because for man, so far as he knows himself to be such, there is no happiness except on condition of being and remaining man.

As an argument against this, some one may instance the happiness of childhood, which every one regrets and envies, and which is regarded as the truest and purest happiness, although it is not human happiness in its fullest development, since the child is not yet a man, and the highest faculties of man exist within him only in the germ. This proves, some say, that happiness is relative to the feelings of the individual. Not at all. The melancholy regret which we feel in thinking of the happiness of our childhood, and in enjoying the actual happiness of the children around us, does not mean that we wish to remain in, or to return to, childhood. "No one," says Plato, "would wish to remain always a child, even though he were promised all the pleasures which one can enjoy at that age." Thus, being a man, no one would wish for the happiness of a child: no one, for example, although in a sense regretting to see his own children growing up, would desire to see them remain for an indefinite period in the innocence and ignorance of childhood.

The happiness of childhood has, then, only a relative value in our eyes. As it is according to the nature of things that man should pass through the state of childhood before becoming a man, childhood, if it is not prolonged beyond the time fixed by nature, is one of the normal phases in the development of humanity: it is the human essence expressing itself in definite and necessary, although relative and transitory, forms. But here also we distinguish the absolute from the relative, the true happiness from the false. The true happiness of the child is associated with the idea of innocence, of candor, of ingenuous and free spontaneity. Imagine, on the contrary, a precocious child, finding pleasure in injuring others, prematurely enjoying human vices: whatever pleasure the child might find in such a state, we should consider it unhappy, we should pity it, and we should try to make it understand that it was preferring a false to a real happiness.

Thus we see that no one would desire the happiness of a lunatic, nor even that of a child (although the latter has a relative value, since its reason is found in the very nature of things); so, too, no one, if he were enlightened, would desire the happiness of a slave, no matter what pleasures there might be for his senses in that state. Imagine a slave so well treated that he should actually love his slavery, like the dog in La Fontaine's fable: would this be true happiness? would it be the legitimate happiness of man? No one would dare to say so, for no one would wish to be taken at his word. One may readily admit, that, for a person who knew no other condition, it would be a state of relative happiness, as it is for the domestic cat, to be well fed, be greatly caressed, and sleep luxuriously on its master's carpet. But one who is conscious of human responsibility and of the virile happiness which accompanies it, would refuse to exchange even its grievous trials for the *far niente* of a favorite slave. He would regard his condition as being absolutely happier, although he might have more to suffer.

If the true idea of happiness should be derived from the

essence of human nature, and not be measured by individual feeling, it follows that man's will may be divided between happiness and pleasure, as it is between virtue and utility. He feels that certain goods promise him a happiness that is not only greater, but better, than certain others offer. He knows very well that he should be happier in striving after them; he envies the lot of those who are able to enjoy such excellent goods; he would like to enjoy them himself; he blames himself for not enjoying this happiness, which is so true and pure that his reason declares it to be the only legitimate object of his desires, while passion drives him away from it. For example, a woman who hesitates between maternal love and an illegitimate passion, will distinguish clearly, in the lucid intervals which occur in the intoxication of her senses, that maternal happiness is of a very different order, and has a very different value, from the happiness of the paramour. Not that one really gives more pleasure than the other; for, in regard to intensity of pleasure, the passion may be far superior to the emotion: but the happiness of a mother has more dignity and beauty than that of a paramour, because in the former the moral personality retains all its independence; while in the latter, on the contrary, this is sacrificed. Thus happiness, in its true meaning, is opposed to pleasure; and it is clear that it might be a duty to prefer one to the other.

Doubtless it will be said that here I have changed the meaning of words, and have confounded happiness with virtue. If, it will be objected, you define true happiness as the fulfilment of duty, or the practice of virtue, it will, of course, be possible to identify happiness with good. But if you give happiness its true meaning, it is nothing but pleasure (refined or otherwise), and has a moral value only in so far as it is the consequence and the reward of merit, but not in itself. If the happiness of maternal love is better than the happiness of the senses, it is because maternal love is a duty, and the fulfilment of this duty is a virtue.

But in my view maternal love is a duty, only because in itself, and before the existence of any moral law, it is an inclination of a higher order than that of the senses — a loftier, purer, nobler activity; and for this very reason, independently of any moral merit, it necessarily affords a certain happiness. This happiness is not necessarily more intense than that of the senses, but it is better: it has more value, more substance, more purity and dignity. We may, then, bring this happiness before us by our imagination, may even enjoy it to a certain extent through the sensibility, and by our reason may judge it to be preferable to any other, while at the same time our senses drive us imperiously toward some object of the senses which is inferior, which we recognize as being so, but which we pursue with sighs, despising ourselves, and wishing that we were strong enough to enjoy true happiness in peace.

Thus, when I oppose true happiness to pleasure, I am not as yet speaking of moral happiness, nor of the contentment of conscience which follows the conscious and voluntary accomplishment of good. It would be, indeed, a vicious circle if I were to begin with postulating such a moral contentment before establishing even the principle of good. The Utilitarians are often guilty of this paralogism, and Kant has justly criticised them for this. No: moral happiness, or the satisfaction of the conscience, is the direct consequence of a certain act of a particular nature, which is the virtuous action. Virtue itself is not a special faculty of the soul: it is the moral force by means of which we obey duty. Duty, in its turn, cannot command us without a motive: if it orders us to prefer one faculty to another, it is because the one is in itself of a superior order. Now, the exercise of a faculty, whatever it may be, is accompanied by a certain happiness; and happiness, as Spinoza has said, is simply "the joy which the soul feels in contemplating its power of action." Happiness is, then, directly connected with the act; it is the act itself: and, since it is our duty to

prefer the most perfect act to that which is less perfect, it is also our duty to prefer the best happiness to that of less worth and value.

Notwithstanding my effort to distinguish this theory of happiness from the common theory of pleasure, the latter will still be insisted on, and it will be said; happiness, whatever you may say, cannot be separated from the idea of pleasure. It is not the activity itself which is happiness: it is the feeling of this activity. Aristotle did indeed make happiness consist in activity, but he adds to this, pleasure. "It is pleasure," he says, "which completes and perfects the act: it is united to the action," he says poetically, "as beauty is united with youth." If this is true; if pleasure enters necessarily into happiness, and is the essential element of it; if every act is accompanied by pleasure; if the best of acts is accompanied by the greatest pleasures — then, when I prefer the greater happiness to the lesser, it is, after all, only pleasure that I prefer to pleasure. Doubtless it is a more refined, more noble and generous, egotism, but still it is egotism.

Perhaps it is just here, in this attempt to utterly exclude all kinds of pleasure from morality, that we may find the reason for the ill success which the abstract and formal doctrine of pure duty has met with among the majority of mankind, and of the resistance which the utilitarian school always makes to it. The latter feels that it stands on firm and solid ground when it asks if it is possible for man to put aside all desire for happiness. Religious philosophy, much less fastidious in this respect than the abstract morality of the schools, does not hesitate to make constant appeals to the feeling of pleasure. Finally, even the abstract moralists themselves unconsciously do the same thing. For when Kant and Fichte set before us their idea of moral force, of moral personality, which will not allow itself to be moved either by low desires or by external constraint, they unconsciously set before us an ideal of elevation which is very

agreeable to human self-respect: and when they urge us above all things not to become objects of contempt, either to others or to ourselves, they take good care to represent a state which would be very painful to our feelings; for what is more sad than to despise one's self, or to be despised?

The doctrine of pure duty, without any admixture of motive taken from the feelings, resembles the doctrine of pure love, advocated by the Quietists, and condemned by the wisest theologians. The mystics of the school of Molinos, of Mme. Guyon, of Fénelon, maintained that the disinterestedness of love to God should be carried to the extent of indifference to salvation. Some went so far as to say they would consent to be damned to please God, and to free themselves from all personal feeling. Bossuet very sensibly condemned these exaggerated views, and proved that absolute indifference to one's self is not required by theology.[1] I believe that the same is true of morality.

Moreover, if we consider more carefully the objections which hold good against the theory of pleasure, we shall see that these do not apply to that of happiness.

First, If I am advised to seek for a certain pleasure because it is *better* than the others which I can obtain, it does not follow that it must be a *more agreeable* pleasure; as we have already made a distinction between the quality and the quantity of pleasure. Second, Even if I should think that in itself this pleasure, for those who are able to enjoy it, must be more agreeable than mine, it does not follow that for me, and to my feelings, it would appear to me to be so.

[1] See the fine work by Bossuet entitled: *Instruction sur les États d'Oraison.* Leibnitz has also given a sound refutation of the doctrine of pure love: "Amare et diligere . . . est amati felicitate perfectionibusque delectari. Hic quosdam mihi objecisse intellegi perfectius esse, ità in Deum sese abjicere, ut solâ ejus voluntate moveare, non delectatione tuâ; *sed sciendum est talia naturæ rerum repugnare: nam conatus agendi oritur tendendo ad perfectionem, cujus sensus delectatio est;* neque aliter actio vel voluntas constat."—Dutens, t. iv., p. 313, *Præf. Cod. Diplom.*

Third, Though I may know in an abstract and general way that every act is accompanied by pleasure, and that, if I should perform a certain act, I should have pleasure, it does not follow that this image of pleasure would have equal influence with the sensitive pleasure given by the objects of my habitual desires. Consequently I might represent to myself this pleasure to be sought, so as to make it merely an intellectual object, and not one of feeling. Fourth, Although an act when perfected may be accompanied by pleasure, it does not follow that it is agreeable to the one who performs it; but it may, on the contrary, be extremely painful. For example, there is no doubt that he who has formed the habit of commanding his passions is happier than he who is subject to them; but it is not so at first. Consequently, in the theory of happiness, as well as in that of abstract duty, virtue is shown to be a painful and difficult constraint. Fifth, Finally I admit that an act is moral in proportion as our minds are occupied with the thought of its intrinsic excellence, without thinking of the pleasure which accompanies it. But it is doubtful whether an utter disregard of pleasure is possible for humanity; and it is to be feared, that, in requiring too much, we might sacrifice to a dream our real and possible morality. Kant himself affirms that not a single act of virtue was ever performed by any man. But the morality which we need is one which is suited to man, and not to some creature who might exist. The world which ought to be can have no interest for us, except so far as something may pass from it into the world as it is.

The theory of happiness seems to the gloomy and profound philosopher Schopenhauer a pure chimera and delusion; and, hostile as he is to the theory of duty, he congratulates Kant on having gotten rid of the theory of *eudæmonism*.[1] The reason for this view is found in the absolute pessimism of this philosopher. He maintains that "this world is the

[1] Schopenhauer, *Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie*, p. 620, at the end of the first volume of the work, *Die Welt als Wille*. 3d ed., 1859.

worst possible world;" that consequently it is absurd to propose happiness as an object of action to those in it. Men being necessarily unhappy, the only moral law is to pity, and if possible to relieve, their woes: the true principle of action is pity, *das Mitleid*. Even if we should grant this, it would still be true that philosophy, having for its object the relief of human woes, would by that means give them all the happiness which they can have; while at the same time one who should act in accordance with it would also secure for himself the best and purest enjoyment. The principle of pity does not, then, exclude the principle of happiness.

To sum up, good consists in perfection and happiness indissolubly united. It is, again, the identity of perfection and of happiness. Here is the point of coincidence and of agreement between the theories of interest and of duty. It is, indeed, our interest which recommends virtue to us; and, if we consider the subject more carefully, we shall see that it would, in reality, be contradictory for a being to act with a view to an interest which is utterly foreign to him. That which has no analogy with my nature is nothing to me, and cannot possibly be a motive for my action.[1] To demand that I should sacrifice myself for that which is not myself, is to suppose that there is something within me which is capable of sacrifice, consequently something excellent, having an intrinsic value. This something cannot be a matter of indifference to me. By sacrificing the inferior part of our nature, the superior part (*τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν*) preserves and protects itself. Thus, it is in my own interest that the moral law commands me to sacrifice my senses to my reason, my egotism to my benevolent and affectionate sentiments. I can be happy only through the sacrifice, but this sacrifice will inevitably make me happy. And unless one were to

[1] Kant himself admits that we cannot submit to the law of duty if we do not feel *some interest* in it. See *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, l. i., v. 4. To see a thing, and to find satisfaction in the existence of that thing, that is to say, to feel an interest in it, is the same thing.

separate one's self from one's self, which is impossible, one will always find one's self at the root of every thing. Gloomy and misanthropic observers of nature delight in revealing the element of self-love in all our passions and in all our actions, that they may triumph over man. But who cannot see that it could not possibly be otherwise? Can a being rid himself entirely of love of being? and is existence, as Spinoza said, any thing but an effort to continue in being? The greatest of sacrifices can be nothing but the sacrifice of our apparent to our true being. At bottom, it is always the interest of our preservation and of our being perfected, two inseparable terms, which duty and virtue enjoin upon us. Thus, morality requires only an apparent sacrifice, a sacrifice which is really in accord with our most imperious instincts.

"If [says Aristotle] a man should seek only to acquire justice, wisdom, or some other virtue, . . . it would be impossible to call him an egotist, and to blame him. However, is he not, in a certain sense, more egotistical than other men, since he desires for himself the best and most beautiful things, and since he enjoys the most exalted part of his being? . . . It is plain that it is this supreme principle which is the essence of man, and which the virtuous man prefers above all others. According to this view, it would then be necessary to call him the most egotistic of men. But this noble egotism is as much superior to common egotism as reason is to passion, or as the good is to the merely useful."[1]

Those who defend utilitarianism are, then, right in saying that man cannot act without being influenced by his interest; but they do not explain clearly what that interest is, for they see in it merely a certain sum, combination, or means of enjoyment, having for its sole term the individual alone in the narrowest sense; and they make all these enjoyments enter into the calculation, for the same reason, and without any difference, except that of intensity, liveliness, duration, certainty, etc.; in a word, they regard it merely as a question of *quantity*. But, as has already been frequently re-

[1] *Ethics Nic.*, l. ix., v. iii.

marked, *quality* should be ranked above quantity. Now, the quality of enjoyments depends on the quality, that is to say, on the excellence and the nobility, of the faculties. True interest is, then, the interest of the better part of our being compared with the lower. Thus explained, we can accept their doctrine: only it is not our interest, properly understood, to prefer the useful to the agreeable, but to prefer *that which is becoming* to both of them. Now, that which is becoming (*honestum*, καλοκἀγαθὸν) is the honor, the dignity, the beauty of the soul: it is that by which we are truly men. If, then, we must necessarily love ourselves, this is that which we ought to love most in ourselves.

If the theory of interest has a basis of truth, which has just been made clear, the theory of duty is none the less entirely and absolutely true; for if there is a true and a false happiness, an interest which is legitimate, and another which is not so, if there are in man inferior and superior parts, it is our duty to prefer our true to our apparent interest, even when our feelings would draw us toward the latter, and not toward the former. Doubtless, there is within us an affection which tends spontaneously toward our true interest; but this affection may be much less vehement and active than that which draws us toward our sensitive and apparent interest. We need, then, a law which shall enjoin upon us our own good in spite of ourselves; and this law is laid upon our feelings by our reason. Hence come the characteristics generally recognized as belonging to the law of duty — necessity and universality: for we cannot fail to recognize the superiority of our moral personality to our sentient being; and this superiority is evident to every one, whatever may be the individual tastes and feelings. To keep the law of duty intact, it is enough that there shall be something absolute in its object. Now, this absolute element is the essence of humanity, which is the same in every man and in all ages (although it is not always perceived in the same manner); and, as we shall see later, the variations

in the moral consciousness do not alter in any respect the essential and absolute object after which it strives.

This doctrine, then, presents itself as a sort of rational *eudæmonism*, since it makes happiness the highest good, in accordance with the nearly unanimous opinion of all philosophers: but it does not take individual feeling for a criterion of happiness; it bases happiness upon the true nature of man, which can be recognized only by reason. In a word, it does not measure happiness by pleasure, but on the contrary it measures pleasure by happiness; so that pleasures have a value only in proportion to the part which they may have in our happiness, whose basis is in our perfection. Aristotle expressed this admirably when he said; "True pleasures are those which appear such to the virtuous man, and the virtuous man is the measure for all things."

CHAPTER V.

IMPERSONAL GOODS.

FROM what precedes, we see that we can agree with the advocates of the theory of happiness, if by happiness they mean, not that which gives us any sort of pleasure, or the greatest amount of pleasure, but the best pleasure; that is, the most excellent activity. Hence the most perfect happiness is found in the highest perfection: and this highest perfection, in its turn, is found in the most exalted act of human nature; that is, in free and reasonable activity, or personality. Thus are reconciled the principle of Aristotle — viz., happiness; the principle of Wolf — viz., perfection; and the principle of Kant and Fichte — viz., human personality. If Kant combated the principle of happiness, it was because he always confounded it with that of pleasure; if he combated the principle of perfection, it was because he had always in view the idea of an abstract perfection, separated from the essence of humanity, and having with it only an external relation; and he could never understand how an object, which is outside of myself, can determine my activity without the intervention of desire and of pleasure. But if by perfection is meant, not perfection in general, but my own perfection, or the development of my own essential nature, it is comprehensible that this intrinsic and personal perfection may have a personal interest for me, and that I cannot conceive it without at the same time conceiving it as *my* good.

The above theory is fully expressed in those strong and beautiful words of Leibnitz, whose truth could never be effaced and destroyed by the philosophy of Kant: —

"I call perfection all which elevates the being (*alle Erhöhung des Wesens*). . . . It consists in the power to act (*in der Kraft zu wirken*); and, as every being consists of a certain force, the greater this force, the higher and freer is the being (*höher und freier ist das Wesen*). Moreover, the greater the force, the more clearly it shows within itself plurality in unity (*Viel aus einem und in einem*[1]). Now, one in many is nothing else than harmony (*die Uebereinstimmung*); and, from harmony, beauty is born; and beauty gives birth to love. From which we see how Happiness, Pleasure, Love, Perfection, Essence, Force, Liberty, Harmony, Order, are linked together, which very few philosophers have remarked. When the soul feels within itself harmony, order, liberty, force, or perfection, it also feels pleasure; and this state produces a durable joy which cannot deceive. Now, when such a joy comes from knowledge, and is accompanied by light, and consequently produces in the will a certain inclination toward good, this is what we call virtue."[2]

This is the comment which Leibnitz makes upon that proposition which I have already quoted, and which I chose as giving the best summary of my own ideas: *Bonum mentis naturale, quum est voluntarium, fit bonum morale.*

But here new difficulties arise, for how can we pass from our own proper good to the good of another? Morality demands of us not only our own individual perfection: it requires, also, that we should seek the happiness of others, or, at the least, that we should do no injury to their dignity, their rights, and their proper goods. How, then, can we rise from personal to impersonal goods? Here philosophy seems to encounter the same difficulty that arises in metaphysics — to pass from the *Ego* to the *Non-Ego*, and from the subject to the object.

[1] Leibnitz says, plurality *from* and *within* unity (*aus* and *in*). The word *aus* signifies the plurality which *comes out* of unity, which is exterior and subordinate to it. The word *in* expresses *interior* plurality. He explains it thus: "So that unity *rules outside of itself*, or, rather, *represents within itself* a greater number of things. Those who are familiar with Leibnitz' *Monadology* will remember that a monad occupies a higher rank in proportion as it has a larger number of subordinate monads, or itself possesses a greater number of perceptions.

[2] *Ueber die Glückseligkeit.* Leibnitz, opera philosophica, Erdm. lxxviii., p. 627.

According to one school of philosophy, the only good with which moral science can concern itself is the common good, public good, or what is called the *general interest*. The Utilitarians themselves have frequently, without being distinctly conscious of it, confounded this general utility with personal and individual utility; and this confusion, which is contrary in principle to their system, has often concealed from them its gaps and imperfections.[1] On the other hand, others have clearly distinguished the difference between a private interest and the general interest of humanity, and they have claimed that the essence of good consists in that which is useful to all.[2]

It is, therefore, necessary to give some consideration to the elucidation of whatever vagueness and confusion there may be in this principle.

It may be remarked, first, that this theory, as well as common utilitarianism, is based upon an equivocal expression, that of *utility*. Recall what has already been said: in the

[1] For example, Mr. J. Stuart Mill tells us: "The utilitarian criterion is not the happiness of the agent himself, *but that of all interested parties: utilitarianism requires* that as between his good and that of others *the agent should be as strictly impartial as a benevolent and disinterested spectator would be.*" If the matter is thus understood, then plainly there can be no discussion; for the adversaries of utilitarianism oppose it only on the hypothesis that it is the theory of personal, not of general, interest. Have there been philosophers who have thus understood it? It would be difficult to deny it. Theoretically, are the principles of personal and of general utility identical? Evidently they are not. They are two principles, having nothing in common but the word *utility*. Mr. Mill does indeed tell us, that, if society were better organized, the happiness of each would be identical with the happiness of all. Very good; but, while waiting for this state of affairs (will it ever come about?), by what principle should one regulate one's life? By the former, or by the latter? It is, also, a confusion of ideas to seek to find the principle of utilitarian philosophy in that gospel maxim, "Do unto others. . . ." This maxim does not give us a *motive* of action, but a *criterion* for it. The utilitarian maxim would be; Do this, *so that* others may do it to you; while the maxim of the gospel means only; *If you wish to know* what you should do to others, ask yourself what you desire of others. In this there is not a shadow of self-interest.

[2] This theory was fully explained and developed in a remarkable essay by M. E. Wiart, *Des Principes de la Morale Considérée Comme Science*. Paris, 1862.

true meaning of the word, a *useful* thing is one which *serves* to procure us a certain good. The useful is, then, only a means; it is not an aim; it is only a relative good. True good is the very thing for which we seek by means of utility Medicine is a good only because it procures health for us. money is a good only because it can serve to satisfy our needs; in itself it is indifferent. Still more, a thing may be useful for evil: in that case, it cannot be said that it is a good. The dagger is very useful for getting rid of an enemy: a cord is very useful for hanging one's self. It is not enough that a thing is useful for it to be good: we must know first for what it is useful. Hence the means cannot be called good in the strict sense of this word: it can be applied only to the end or the aim. It must, then, be known whether this end is pleasure, or something else. Now, this difficulty is just as great in respect to general, as to individual, utility.

Following out the principle of the general interest, it is said that this is the happiness of mankind. But in what does happiness consist? We must always come back to this. Each one understands happiness in his own way. One considers that power is happiness, another thinks riches make it: the majority find it in the pleasures of the senses, the minority in the noble and refined delights of the heart and the mind. If you leave men to judge what is meant by happiness, you will give to the ambitious man power; to the avaricious man, gold; to the voluptuary, the pleasures of the senses. The emperors who gave the people *panem et circenses*, gave them what they asked for, and what made them happy. Frequently slaves do not ask for freedom: it would, then, be generosity to them to leave them slaves. But if, on the other hand, instead of making each one a judge of true happiness, you form an absolute and general type of human happiness, derived from the essence of human nature, you thus admit, as I have already done, that for each man there is a good within himself, a true good, distinct from pleasure, independent of general utility, which is, at least logically, anterior to the common good, to the good of all.

The advocates of general utility have tacitly admitted these principles. For example, in the work already referred to, M. Émile Wiart inquires if slavery is legitimate, if it is a good or an evil; and he reasons thus:—

"For our own part, we may say that an imperious natural instinct within man cries out in favor of liberty; that slavery generally produces in the slave ignorance and degradation; that it forbids him to follow even the most sacred instincts; that in the master it produces indolence, pride, cruelty; that from a social point of view it prevents the best organization of labor; and from all these evils we conclude that slavery is an evil."

But what is a *sacred* instinct? Why is *degradation* an evil? Has there not been introduced here a principle different from that of general utility — that is, the principle of the *excellence* of the human personality, and of the superiority of those faculties which constitute the man to those which he holds in common with the animal? Instead of taking the slave himself, with his ignorant and perverted consciousness, as the judge of his own happiness, there is here contrasted with him an absolute type of human happiness, according to which one ought not to degrade one's self, and one ought to sacrifice the lower appetites to the most sacred instincts. Is not this the same as distinguishing good from pleasure, or from common utility, and recognizing the fact, that in every man, leaving out of account society and general interest, there is something which is in itself excellent, and independent of the happiness of the senses? It is not because a degraded man is useless or dangerous to society that one ought not to degrade one's self; but it is because that is bad in itself, even were there no society. Robinson Crusoe in his island ought not to get drunk any more than if he were in his native country; and the moral beauty of this immortal romance lies in the fact that it represents to us, in the most striking manner, the duties of man to himself, even in solitude, even in absolute loneliness.

The same author clearly, and justly, distinguishes *real* goods from those of the senses; and he adds, that, "if the

philosopher should take into account the variety of sensations, he should do so only in a secondary way." He says again; "An indolent, worldly life, devoted to the pleasures of the senses taken with moderation, often gives greater enjoyment, and, above all, less suffering, than an active, heroic, intelligent life, in which the *ideal* of human life is, nevertheless, better realized, and from which the instincts of our nature receive in reality a *fuller and higher* satisfaction." Now, of these two contrasted lives, our author prefers the second. Here, again, the criterion of general utility is not invoked. It is, instead, the principle of the excellence of our faculties, and of the ideal of humanity, which consists in the full development of our highest instincts.

When we are required to strive for the happiness of men, we are then really required to procure for them, not sensitive and apparent goods, but these which are real and true — instruction, liberty, personal dignity. But those goods which we ought to procure for others we should also acquire for ourselves. They are goods for us, even before we can transmit them to others. Here returns the question already suggested. How can we pass from our own good to the common good, or, to use the language of the schools, from our duties to ourselves to our duties towards other men?

When we have perceived that there is a certain number of objects which are desirable for us, some for the pleasure which they will at once give us, others for their intrinsic excellence, it is impossible for us not to apply by induction the same ideas to other men who, as experience has taught us, resemble ourselves. It is only little by little, and proportionately to our experience, that the human mind accustoms itself to apply to others the idea of those goods which we ourselves desire; but, in proportion as the similarity of nature which unites men becomes better known to us, we learn to think that that which is a good for us is a good for them.[1]

[1] This is not so clear that one could believe it at once. How long a time did it take for men to learn that honor is a good for the serf as well as for the

If I love life, it is probable that others love it also: if instruction ennobles my soul, if courage in time of peril is honorable and gives grandeur, this is just as true of others as of myself. Simply because other men are men, I necessarily affirm of them all that I affirm of myself. Thus by degrees there is formed within the human mind the idea of *the good of others* (*τὸ ἀλλοτρίον ἀγαθὸν*), which we see to be merely an extension and a generalization of our own good.

In truth, when by imagination I transport those different goods into the souls of other men, I consider them as being goods for those men (either by the pleasure which they cause, or by the perfection and excellence which they communicate); in this sense they are still personal goods: but, as to myself, these goods are outside of myself, distinct from those which are properly mine; and yet I recognize it as good that other men should enjoy them, that they should be happier and more perfect. Here, then, is a sure and indubitable good, which is not — at least not directly — the object of our personal desires, but which our minds, nevertheless, declare good, even though our feelings, in their egotism, may be pained by it.

Moreover, men are not merely individuals: they are necessarily linked together by physical bonds or those of custom; and these different bonds give rise to groups, to bodies, which we may consider as individuals: the family, the country, human society in general, are the three great principal groups under which all others may be ranged. And we may apply to these groups every thing that we have already applied to the individual: we shall then have the good of the family, the good of the country, the good of humanity; and these different kinds of good may always, just as in the case of the individual, be measured in two ways, either by pleasure or by their intrinsic excellence.

noble, that the family is a good for the slave as well as for the master! And even now how many men there are who, perceiving that instruction is a good for themselves, are not willing to admit that it would be so for the common people!

Finally, we may extend the idea of good, and, in fact, we do extend it, when, considering the entire universe as a whole, and in a certain sense (to use the expression of the Stoics) as a great animal, or rather a living being (ζῶόν τι), we suppose that the universe itself has its good, which is not merely the sum of all the goods possessed by the various creatures, but also their co-ordination for the preserving and perfecting of all. We see it (at least in our imagination) passing from degree to degree, through all the perfections compatible with its essence, from movement to life, from life to feeling, from feeling to intelligence and to liberty, abandoning the lower degrees only when it has attained higher ones, and including all in unity.

This is not all, and the ultimate development of the idea of good has not yet been attained. Since the goods which experience shows us are distinguished by their degree of excellence, and since some of them seem to us better than others; since beings themselves appear to us to be more excellent in proportion as they possess qualities which are more excellent — we can conceive of the existence either of goods more excellent than any which we already know, or of the same developed to a higher degree; so, too, we can imagine creatures more and more perfect, possessing goods which are more and more excellent; and finally, at the end of this series, or rather, outside even of this series, we can imagine a primal being, one who is necessary and absolute, who possesses the fulness of good, or even, being himself the source of all that is good, is nothing else than good itself in its ultimate and absolute essence.

Thus our reason can gradually free the idea of good from every thing personal and subjective, and can pass from our own good to the idea of human good in general; then to the good of the universe — that is, universal order; and finally, to good in itself — that is, God.

But the difficulty previously suggested still remains: if my speculative reason declares that there is a good outside

of myself, why should my practical reason command me to regard this good in itself as a good *for me?* Why should I be required to conform to the divine will because it is good, to imitate God because he is the model of good, to seek to promote universal order because it is good, to do good to men, and, above all, not to do them harm? Will not our principle of perfection, or of excellence, which has hitherto been sufficient for us, abandon us here? Will not the principle of human personality become simply the most exalted form of the principle of egotism?

I reply that the principle of perfection explains our duties toward others by tracing them back to our duties toward ourselves. The instincts of sociability, of the family, of patriotism, and the religious sentiment, are, in truth, among our best and most excellent faculties. The duty of perfecting ourselves will, then, necessarily involve the duty of cultivating and satisfying philanthropic and disinterested inclinations, and consequently of doing good to mankind, to our relatives, to our friends, of serving God and our country. Such an explanation would be specious, but it does not seem satisfactory; for it would, as it appears to me, destroy the true essence of social duties. Mankind should be an *end* for us, not a *means*, not even the means of perfecting ourselves: nature has not destined men to serve us as a means for our moral grandeur, any more than for our pleasure or our convenience. There would, for example, be something revolting in saying that one ought to love one's children, not for their own sake, but because the paternal sentiment is a beautiful one; so that we should really love in them the refinement of our own spirits. It is not charity if we help poor people simply to show them that we are charitable, nor yet if we wish that there should be poor people so that we might have an opportunity of being charitable. True charity will wish that there were no occasion for its exercise. To reduce all the social virtues to personal virtues would be, if you will, a noble egotism; but it would still be only a form of egotism.

Now, the moral instinct tells us that there is something better.

I think, however, that, if we carry out our principle a little farther, we shall be able to solve this difficulty.

Is not humanity composed of individuals possessing certain common characteristics? Are there, on the other hand, common and universal substances, which, united with individuality, are at bottom the sole realities? This great problem of metaphysics cannot be discussed here: it must be remanded to the science to which it belongs. But in whatever way one may answer it, whether one sees in humanity a body of which individuals form the members, or, on the contrary, an association of like beings which are theoretically identical, in either case one is compelled to recognize in the human community something more than a simple collection or juxtaposition of particles, a gathering of atoms, a mechanical and purely external aggregation. There is among men an internal bond of union, *vinculum sociale*,[1] which is manifested in the affections, in sympathy, in language, in civil society, but which must be something more profound than any of these, imbedded, as it is, in the profoundest depths of the essence of humanity. It is this bond which Christianity has so clearly understood, and which it has personified in Christ. "There is," says St. Paul, "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." No moral deduction is possible, unless we admit as a primary and incontestable fact, which experience has made more and more clear, but which was intuitively perceived at the very beginning of human society, this spiritual community which unites men, and makes of them a single body, as St. Paul says, or a single city, as Zeno expresses it. It was this feel-

[1] Leibnitz speaks somewhere of a *vinculum substantiale* between the soul and body. It is not a substance, and it is more than a juxtaposition. Why may not substances have modes of communication of which we know nothing? The *vinculum sociale* would belong to this kind.

ing of community, just beginning to be conscious of itself, which caused those bursts of applause from the Romans when they heard for the first time that fine line by Terence, "*Homo sum*," etc. All men are brothers, said the Christians. All men are kinsmen, said the Stoics. In whatever way you express it, all must come to this.

Men being united by a community of essence, no one can say; That which concerns another is nothing to me. "Whatever is useful to the hive is useful to the bee," said Marcus Aurelius; and the converse is true. In his *Republic* Plato expressed admirably this union and fraternity of souls, without which there could be no well-ordered republic; although he mistook entirely the way in which this perfect unity could be attained.

"When good or evil happens to any one, all will say together, 'My affairs are prosperous;' or, 'My affairs go badly.' . . . The greatest good of the state is, that all its members should feel as their own the pleasure or the grief of an individual, . . . just as when one has hurt his finger, and immediately, in virtue of the intimate union established between the soul and the body, the soul is informed of it, and the whole man is grieved by the injury to one of his parts: hence it is said of the entire man, that he has been injured in the finger."

From this it follows that no man can separate his own good from that of others. The good of another is my own good, for nothing human is foreign to me.

True human perfection, the ideal excellence of human nature, consists in forgetting one's self in others. The perfect type of this forgetfulness of self in another is maternal love. The mother forgets herself so far as to forget that there is any thing beautiful and refined in love itself. The mother who suffers the pangs of death for her beloved child, the *mater dolorosa*, does not know that the pangs she feels are sublime, and that they are the ornament of the maternal heart. She suffers divinely; and this suffering for another in another, this suffering which forgets itself, is the divine

seal of a nature which belongs, not merely to the world of the senses, but also to the world of the soul and the spirit. Thus, the hero who sacrifices himself for his country, the friend who sacrifices himself for his friend, attain perfection only when they do not even know that they are heroes. Far from seeing in other men merely the instruments or the occasions for their own moral grandeur, they attain this very grandeur only on condition of giving themselves up entirely, and forgetting their grandeur. It is because they have regarded humanity as an *end* in itself, and not as a *means*, that they themselves have risen to the highest point of which human nature is capable. Thus the principle of excellence is not only compatible with that of the community of essence, but it is perfected by this, and finds in it its necessary complement.

Kant labored to deduce social duties, the duties of action and of benevolence, which he calls meritorious or imperfect duties, from the idea of human personality: his statement is that they *harmonize* with the idea of the person, or of humanity, considered as an end in itself. But if these duties merely *harmonize*, then they simply do not disagree with it, and whoever pleases may fulfil them. It does not follow that he ought to do so. It seems to follow that the duties of affection and of benevolence are absolutely free, and that they depend exclusively on the will of each person. Now, according to my theory, devotion to mankind does not merely harmonize with humanity, but completes and perfects the idea of it.

There are, then, two shoals which we must avoid in philosophy as well as in politics — the absorption of the Ego in humanity, and of humanity in the Ego.

If, on the one hand, we accept, as a supreme and exclusive principle, the community of essence or fraternity, the individual will no longer be any thing but the instrument for the happiness of others. He will be worth nothing by and for himself; he ought not to have, in his own estimation, any

true and absolute value; his value will be merely in direct proportion to the use which others make of it. Yet duty to others should never be carried so far as to sacrifice to them personal dignity. Andrew Fletcher said that he would give his life for his country, but that he would not commit an ignoble action to save her. One may excuse, and even in an emergency admire, while condemning, such an act as that related in *The Spy*, by Cooper; but one should not lay down a principle which will justify it beforehand. Humanity is sacred only because man is so already. If we do not begin by laying down at the outset the principle of excellence, whose highest formula is that of a free personality, we cannot find in others, any more than in ourselves, this inviolable personality to which we owe respect. From this stand-point, one might criticise the tendency of theologians to sacrifice human rights, and even human dignity, to charity; to consider almsgiving as the ideal of human virtue, the poor as instruments of salvation for the rich; finally, to make beggary itself almost a virtue. For this reason I cannot altogether approve Father Gratry's formula, *assistance given by every being to every being.*[1] This phrase, besides being too vague and too general, has the defect of regarding nothing in beings but their respective weaknesses. In morals, one should not take the point of view of weakness, but that of strength. If every creature is weak, I myself, being a creature, am also weak, and I have as much need of help as the others. But how can I do for others what I have not the strength to do for myself? There would also be danger that some of the maxims of the gospel would develop an enervating and effeminate sensibility, had not the Church, with its practical good sense, wisely modified their interpretation.

Thus we see man's double essence: he is at once an individual and a member of the human race. He is at once a

[1] See the fine work *Sources*. I will remark here, that this formula had been previously suggested by M. Oudot, in his work entitled, *Science et Conscience du Devoir*. Paris, 1868.

whole and a part of a whole. Being himself a whole, he ought not to be utterly sacrificed to the whole of which he makes a part; but, on the other hand, he ought not to make himself the centre of the whole of which he is a part. He should not be a means in relation to others, nor should others be a means in relation to him. The pagan principle of strength (*virtus*), and the Christian principle of charity, must be united and reconciled in the idea of human excellence, which is composed of both.

Is such a philosophy accused of being a philosophy of pride and of self-love, and of making man himself the end of man? It is, some say, a carnal and human philosophy, which is based upon honor, not upon duty. Why should one speak the truth? Is it because the truth is beautiful? No, but because it is becoming to an honorable man, a fine character, to speak the truth. Why love what is beautiful? Is it because the beautiful is lovable? No, but because love of beautiful things is a part of a refined and elevated nature. Why respect and protect weakness? Is it because weak beings are in themselves worthy of compassion? No, but because it is noble and beautiful for a strong man to put himself at the service of the weak. Thus this philosophy has no reason and no motive but the satisfaction of contemplating one's self in a fair mirror. It is a splendid philosophy, but one corrupted by a secret vice — *splendida vitia*.

I repeat, all these objections apply to the principle of excellence only when it is misunderstood. In truth, to be vain of one's own refinement and one's own greatness is by no means the highest degree of human excellence; to see, in the true and the beautiful, only the means of aggrandizing ourselves in our own eyes, is not the ideal for our nature. A man who really loves truth, forgets himself in the presence of truth: a man who really loves nature, forgets himself in the presence of nature. Can one imagine a really noble soul, which, in the presence of some grand natural object, like the ocean or Mont Blanc, should say to itself, "I am sublime,"

instead of saying, "That is sublime"? Can one imagine a scientific man who, in the glow of discovery, instead of being utterly absorbed in his idea, should say to himself, "How great I am"? No: it is at once a gift and a mystery of human nature, that in it the personal is constantly brought into relation with the impersonal; in a certain sense this is the union of the two natures, the divine and the human; and its highest personality consists, not in losing and in sacrificing this personality, but in forgetting it entirely.

This participation of the Ego in something outside of itself does not end with humanity, with nature, nor even with the true and the beautiful; but it extends still farther, — on to the very principle of humanity and of nature, on to the living and absolute type of the true and the beautiful, on to the good in its very essence, on to God. Human nature is capable of rising up to the love of God; and the greatest philosophers, as well as theologians — Plato, Malebranche, Fénelon, Spinoza — regarded the idea of God, and love for him, as the corner-stone of morality. Aristotle himself, though so engrossed with the consideration of human good, regards contemplation of the divine as the ideal of the highest activity, and turns a deaf ear to those who say; "Mortals, do not concern yourselves with things immortal."

It is this participation in the divine and the absolute which gives to the human being an absolute value. If there were nothing absolute in the world, how could there be any being endowed with a holy and sacred character? Do you say that the human person is inviolable? What is this inviolability if it is not holiness itself — something which we have no right to humiliate, nor to do violence to, nor to bend to our desires, nor to persecute — something which inspires respect? And how can you feel respect for a thing which has only a transitory, accidental, relative value, for a mere phenomenon, which begins and passes away? That part of man which has an absolute value surely cannot be his physical being, limited in space and time, subject to so many weaknesses, to

so many sufferings, which has so many bonds of union with the animal world, and so many analogies to it? It cannot be such and such an individual, Peter or Paul, who is born to-day, and will die to-morrow? No: it is humanity in general, it is the human essence; it is something which does not pass by, which does not die when individuals pass away and die — it is something absolute.

In this sense the Stoics are right in saying that man is a god: that which they called this indwelling god is this human essence, of which the individual is merely the depositary, which he ought to preserve sacred and inviolate as a holy trust. This respect for human personality is called by religious philosophy, holiness: secular philosophy calls it honor. Under widely differing forms the same principle animates each: it is the idea of something sacred within us which we should neither degrade nor soil. One party regards mainly its purity: the other considers its strength. Angelic innocence is the ideal of the one: civil and military pride is that of the other. The former regard contemplation as the best of activities: the latter prefer action. The former, in their fear of making the individual vain, sometimes abase a little too much the part of personality itself: the latter, in their fear of diminishing the importance of the person, sometimes exalt the individual a little too much. The duty of practical morality is to determine with precision what are the true duties of human personality. But it is evident, that, within the individual and actual man, there is a true and ideal man, humanity in itself, which we should not suffer to be corrupted, either by our own fault or by that of others: this is the very fundamental idea of morality. Again I ask, How would this be possible if human nature did not partake of the absolute and the infinite?

But this absolute which is manifested in humanity is not humanity itself; for the human species, like all species, has had a beginning, may perhaps have an end, and, taken as a whole, is simply a great phenomenon. Can it be that that

within it which is inviolable, that element of its essence which is sacred and divine, was born one day to perish in another? Can one imagine any combination whatever of phenomena which could of itself rise to the dignity of *a sacred and inviolable thing (homo res sacra homini)*? No: humanity participates in the absolute, but it is not the absolute; it lives, moves, and breathes in God, but it is not God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRUE, THE GOOD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL.

BEFORE carrying our researches into the nature of good up to the point at which they must stop, that is to say, up to the absolute good, let us once more consider this idea in its relations to those which lie near it, especially the ideas of the true and the beautiful, which have marked analogies and profound affinities with it.

The philosopher who has most emphatically maintained the identity of the true and the good is Wollaston. According to him, virtue consists simply in the affirmation of the truth; vice, in the negation of the truth. That is plain enough in regard to truth and falsehood; but it is all the same, according to him, in every thing else. For example, what is it to appropriate to ourselves the property of another? It is to affirm that what does not belong to us does belong to us. What is it to break into a warehouse? It is to try, contrary to the nature of things, to use a warehouse as common property. What is it to attempt the life of another? It is to affirm that the life of another is in our possession, as a thing belongs to its master. What is it to betray one's country? It is to treat one's country as if it were not one's country. What is ingratitude? It is the denial of a benefit, etc. In a word, it will always be seen that vice is the negation of a truth: and, as this negation must be conscious of itself in order to be culpable, it is clear that all kinds of vice may be traced back to falsehood; for knowingly to affirm what one knows to be false is to lie. If it be now asked why falsehood is a vice, and why truth is a

virtue; it is because falsehood desires the opposite of that which is; it desires that what is false should be true, and that what is true should be false; it is, then, *absurd* in the logical meaning of this word. Vice, then, is simply an absurdity. Virtue, on the contrary, being conformity to truth, is nothing else than reason. Now, it is according to the nature of things that reason should be reasonable. Virtue is, then, simply conformity with the nature of things. This is evidently the same point of view as that taken by the philosophy of Clarke, of Cudworth, and even of Montesquieu —in a word, of all those philosophers who regard moral verities simply as eternal and necessary relations, conformable to the nature of things.

This theory is true, but only in a vague and general way: it ceases to be so as soon as one attempts to define its terms exactly. It is quite certain that moral verities are *truths*, but it does not follow that the good must be the *true*.

Truth may be understood in two ways — in an objective and in a subjective sense. Objectively, truth is being itself: it is the necessary and essential relation of things, which would continue to be what it is even if I were not present to form a thought of it. Subjectively, truth is the conformity of the thought to its object. Now, neither in its subjective, nor in its objective, sense, is truth identical with good.

The good, like the true, may also be understood in two senses — one objective, the other subjective. Objectively, the good is the character, based upon the essence of things, which imposes an obligatory law upon the moral agent. Subjectively, good is the conformity of the will to this obligatory law: it is, according to Kant's definition, the *good will*.

Now, the objective good, or good in itself, is not the same as the objective true, that is to say, being itself; and the subjective good, or *moral* good, is not the same as the subjectively true, or the *logically* true.

Subjectively, the true is the conformity of the thought

with its object: now, good, considered subjectively, is the conformity of the will with its object. The true concerns only the understanding: the good concerns the will. The perception of truth, as such, when it appears, is inevitable: moral action — that is, the conformity of action with the law — is not inevitable. I cannot wish that what is true should be false, nor that what is false should be true; I cannot wish that two and two would make five, when my reason shows me that their sum is four; but I can wish that my actions should be conformed, or not conformed, to what my reason tells me is true. I do not reject those moral laws which restrain my free will so far as their truth is concerned: I reject them so far as they are contrary to my interests. Undoubtedly, criminal actions are always accompanied by more or less falsehood; but, as regards their nature, they are not lies. If I rob a warehouse, I deny that it is a warehouse, for fear lest I may be compelled to make restoration; but this is only an accidental accompaniment of the act, it is not its basis; for if I had no fear, either of punishment or of disgrace, it would matter little to me whether the warehouse were known to be one, provided I could get possession of the contents. The robber who takes a watch, does not by this act affirm that the watch belongs to him: what he affirms is, that he wishes to get the good of it; this is all that he asks. The intrinsic truth of the proposition matters little to him. So, too, the homicide affirms nothing at all, unless it be that his revenge or his interest require the death of a man: now, this is perfectly true. A lie itself is not always an effort and rebellion against the truth: the liar does not wish that the truth should not be the truth. It may be what it pleases: he does not care, provided he can make others believe what he chooses. Undoubtedly there are cases in which one hates the truth, as being contrary to one's interests, and in which one tries to stifle and falsify it, even in one's own eyes; and this is what is called lying to one's self; but this is only a special case — it is not so in all

kinds of lies. Frequently, on the contrary, the liar conceals a truth which is injurious to others, and favorable to himself:[1] in such a case he would be greatly annoyed if this truth were not a truth.

Furthermore, to confound the good and the true would lead to the negation of morality, rather than to its establishment. Actions regarded as criminal do, in reality, represent truths, just as truly as do honorable and generous actions. That a man can dispose of the lives of his fellow-creatures because of his strength and his passions, is a perfectly true proposition. It is true that I can appropriate the property of others: it is true that I can make use of words to conceal my thoughts. These propositions are just as true as are the converse ones. If I did not already know that it is good to love one's fellows, to respect their lives and their property, to keep one's word, to cultivate one's mind, why should I be under any obligation to obey this kind of truths rather than the opposite ones? To affirm that the one sort are necessary, and the other contingent, truths, is to assume the point in question. Unless one believes that there is something more excellent in the life of man than the satisfaction of his inclinations, in truth than in falsehood, in thought than in sensual appetite, it would no longer be true in a necessary way that one should respect human life, keep one's word, ennoble one's thoughts, etc. It would, instead, be permissible to choose between these two classes of contradictory truths, according as the interests or the feelings of each one might incline him.

If, now, we consider objective good, as Clarke has done, we shall see that neither is this identical with good.

Undoubtedly, by the very fact that I distinguish good from pleasure, and even that I distinguish it from the moral law or from duty, as a cause from its effect, by the very fact that I assign to it an objective basis even before knowing in what it consists, I admit that it has its root in the nature of things

[1] For example, a thief who lies.

and in their necessary relations: hence I recognize that it is *something true*, but it does not follow that it is *the true*. If it were so, then these two ideas would be equivalent, and could always be interchanged, which is not the case.

Mathematical truths are truths, yet they form no part of what is called the good: they lay no commands upon the will. They undoubtedly furnish some practical rules; for example, a person who wishes to attain a certain end will learn of the geometricians to make use of certain means. But, if practice shows us a more convenient method, we are under no obligation to follow the rules of geometry. Besides, there are in the sciences a number of abstract truths which have no practical application, and which are purely objects of contemplation. Thus truth, so far as it is purely speculative, and involves no necessity for action, is essentially distinct from the good.

Still further, there are truths which have an inevitable practical application, which, nevertheless, do not become moral truths. For example, the laws of logic are not merely speculative laws, but they are also practical laws, and laws which are practically necessary. Thus, any one who wishes to reason correctly, must reason according to the laws of syllogism. But the laws of logic are perfectly distinct from moral laws. The former are absolutely necessary: the second have only a relative necessity. As a matter of fact, I can always free myself from moral laws, even when I recognize them as such: I cannot throw off the laws of logic. I cannot, for example, make a syllogism with four terms; that is absolutely impossible for me; if my lips were to do it, my mind would not. In such a case I deceive others, but not myself; it is a lie, not an error; thus it is the moral law, not the law of logic, that is violated.

The essential character of the good, then, as compared with the true, is that it is *obligatory;* that is, it commands the will without constraining it. The true, by itself alone, has not this character; for either it is perceived by the under-

standing, and its affirmation is absolutely necessary, or it is not thus perceived, and its affirmation is impossible. This does not exclude the possibility of voluntary or semi-voluntary errors; but, in proportion as the error is voluntary, it is a sin; and in this case it is a shortcoming in morality and not in logic, a violation of the good, not of the true.

Unquestionably, the order of relations which I call the good, forms a part of the essence of things, and in this way of truth also; but this is only from one point of view; it is not the whole. Once more, moral truths are *truths:* it does not follow that the good is equivalent to *the truth.* We must still inquire why certain truths involve moral obligation, and others do not; why some are practical, and others speculative. Now, this character which distinguishes one from another is precisely the good: it cannot, then, be confounded with the true.

If there were in nature no relations but those of quantity (relations of the whole to a part), or of the general to the special (orders and species, laws and phenomena), there would be mathematical, logical, and physical sciences, but there would be no moral science. Moral science, as Malebranche has said, implies that there are between things relations of perfection, of dignity, and of excellence: it is because one thing is better than another that it is our duty to prefer it. Good, then, implies that there is, between things or attributes, an order of quality distinct from the order of quantity (whether mathematical or logical). If you suppress the quality of things, you suppress all that renders one more estimable than another. Aside from that, the understanding is always determined by the true, but the will has no other law than pleasure. If you refuse to accept an objective hierarchy of goods, nothing remains but a subjective scale of pleasures; and consequently, as I remarked above, all moral science disappears. Truth in general comprises, then, all kinds of objective relations: good concerns only relations of perfection.

Thus the good will always be distinguished from the true, whether considered subjectively or objectively. Can it, then, be said that the good and the true have not mutual and profound affinities, or even that they do not flow from a common source? We cannot venture to affirm this. The good and the true, which are separate to human vision, must mingle at their source. From the same origin come the being and the goodness of things: perhaps, even, Plato saw truly when he suggested that good itself is the essence of truth and of being — greatly surpassing them, he says, in dignity and in power. Perhaps, also, this is what Descartes meant when he said that God is the author of the eternal verities. But it would be impossible to carry our inquiries into the nature of good so high and so far without confounding morals with metaphysics, and, while I do not wish to make one absolutely independent of the other, I think that they should be distinct.

We have just distinguished the good from the true. Let us try to distinguish the beautiful from the good.

The kinship of the beautiful and of the good appears at every turn in the Grecian philosophy. The term *κάλον* often takes the place of *ἀγαθὸν*; and they are even united in a beautiful word, which is peculiarly characteristic of the Grecian language — *τὸ καλοκἀγαθὸν*, *the beautiful and the good* united by an indissoluble bond. In the *Gorgias*, Plato, in trying to distinguish good from pleasure, says; "It is more *beautiful* (*κάλλιον*) to suffer an injustice than to commit one." The words which Plato uses in describing a well-regulated soul are all borrowed from æsthetics — *εὐρυθμία*, *ἁρμονία*, etc. The wise man is a musician (*ὁ σοφὸς μουσικὸς*): human life has need of number (*ἀριθμῳ*). Reciprocally, with Plato and with Socrates, the beautiful is identical with the good. In a word, while he has never expressly affirmed the identity of the two ideas, Plato constantly uses one for the other, and by implication makes them one and the same.

The same assimilation of the beautiful and the good is

found in the school of the Stoics. Recall the celebrated *sorites* of Chrysippus: "The *good* is desirable; the desirable is lovely; that which is lovely is worthy of praise; that which is worthy of praise is *beautiful*."[1] By these intermediaries, somewhat arbitrarily chosen, he passes from the good to the beautiful, as to an idea equivalent to the first. Thus the idea of virtue held by the Stoics, precisely like that of Plato in principle, comes back to the idea of harmony, of unity, of being in unison with one's self (*constantia, consensus, compositio*).

Among the moderns, the assimilation of the beautiful with the good is much rarer than among the ancients. This is due mainly to Christianity, which, arising at first chiefly as a protest against the visible life, against nature, necessarily regarded the beautiful as an inferior idea, outside of the circle of morals. Moreover, Christianity, in making suffering a part even of the idea of moral perfection, since God himself wept and died, assailed that character of grace and harmony which all the Greeks, even the Stoics, considered as essential to virtue. Furthermore, the beautiful has, as a general thing, attracted little attention from philosophers up to the time of Kant. Since that time, German philosophy has always attached great importance to the philosophy of the beautiful; and an entire school, that of Herbart, makes morals a branch of æsthetics. As we have already seen,[2] this was the tendency of Leibnitz' philosophy also.

The same objection which arises to the identification of the true and the good, has equal force against the confusion of the true and the beautiful; for after mentioning the analogies, which no one contests, we must next point out the differences — that is to say, draw the distinction — between the two. In fact, even if the true and the good should be identical in essence, it is nevertheless true that logic is not moral

[1] Plutarch. Stoïc. Rep. ch. 13: τὸ ἀγαθὸν αἱρετὸν· τὸ δ'αἱρετὸν ἐραστὸν· τὸ δ'ἐραστὸν ἐπαίνετον· τὸ δ'ἐπαίνετον καλόν.

[2] P. 90.

science. Similarly, if the good were identical with the beautiful, moral science would not be æsthetics. Herbart himself, after having united the two, immediately separates them as everybody else does, and treats æsthetics as a separate science. There is, then, a certain point of view where the good may be distinguished from the beautiful, as there is another where it may be distinguished from the true. Now, it is just precisely that point of view which makes of good a special object, and which it is the aim of moral science to establish.

I am willing to grant figuratively that good is the *beauty* of the soul: thus Plato, using another metaphor, says that good is the *health* of the soul. But one does not conclude from this that moral science is a part of medicine, and one should not conclude from the first figure that it is a part of æsthetics.

The æsthetic sentiment is essentially different from the moral sentiment. The æsthetic sentiment exists in the presence of the beautiful when it lays no obligation upon our responsibility. If the idea of moral obligation rises within us, the æsthetic sentiment disappears. It was a profound remark made by Schiller, that, in the theatre, devotion, heroism, noble sentiments, in a word, high morality, touch and delight us, only because we do not feel obliged to realize them. Suppose, on the contrary, that we perceive in the poet the intention of reading us a lesson: all æsthetic pleasure disappears; conscience speaks in its stead; and the pleasurable sentiment which filled us a moment before is succeeded by the noble, but painful, feeling of responsibility.

Thus the good is distinguished from the beautiful, at least subjectively, by the different feelings which each arouses, and by the idea of responsibility and obligation which is attached to one, and is lacking in the other. In truth, after all the most recent philosophic investigations of this difficult subject, there appears to be agreement as to the principle that the beautiful is the union of the intellectual and the sensitive, of the general and of the individual; it is the idea

manifested in matter; or, as Jouffroy expresses it, it is the invisible expressed by the visible. These definitions are all identical, and all show us that the sensuous element is one of the necessary and essential conditions of the beautiful. This is the reason why the beautiful is not absolutely absolute, like the good and the true. It has an absolute basis; but, as it is joined to the sensuous, there is always in the beautiful something relative to its organization. The good, on the contrary, is essentially absolute; if it is united to the sensuous, and if for that reason it includes some relative element, this is not its essence; on the contrary, that must be an accident which alters its essence, and prevents it from being entirely itself.

It will perhaps be objected, by an argument *ad hominem*, that I have myself introduced a sensuous element into the definition of good, since I regard happiness as an integral and essential part of that definition. But I may answer with Plato; "We speak only of the human life, for perhaps in the divine life it would not be thus." In fact, it is not clear that physical sensation, even in that pure state in which pleasure is conceived to exist without any alloy of pain, is reconcilable with the idea of the perfect being; and consequently, good would exist in such a being unmingled with any sensuous element. Far from ceasing to be good, it would become, on the contrary, absolute good. But, setting aside this consideration, I say that by the union of the intellectual and the sensuous, I mean the intellectual manifested in sensuous forms; that is to say, by form, movement, color, or sound. In a word, it is the external, not the internal, sense, which, united with the idea, constitutes the beautiful. By the internal sense we enjoy the beautiful, but we do not make it. Now, the happiness which, according to my theory, enters into the idea of good, belongs to the internal, not to the external, sense.

Undoubtedly, good embodies itself in exterior actions, and consequently is manifest in the world of sense. It is, there-

fore, united to the sensuous, as is the beautiful, but with this difference: that in the beautiful, the sensuous element is essential and primordial; in the good, it is only consequent and secondary. Take from the Venus of Milo matter, that is, the marble, with the form, that is, the statue itself, and preserve only the idea: its beauty has disappeared altogether. On the other hand, take a moral action; suppose the will is not executed on account of circumstances independent of itself; the moral value of the action remains intact. By this we see that the sensuous is extraneous to the good, and is only its exterior form.

But the objection may be carried farther: it may be said, that in the very idea of good, before any material and external realization, there enters necessarily a matter, and a sensuous matter. The good, like the beautiful, is composed of a matter and a form; the form is the idea of perfection; but this idea must be realized in the real world, and in some real object, or it is empty. The aim of morality is to raise the sensuous within us and outside of us to the sphere of the intelligible, to transform nature into reason, fatality into liberty, the thing into thought: it is to use one's members for work, one's words for the truth, one's life for the happiness of others, one's possessions for their benefit. Now, all these things, members, words, life, and possessions, are sensuous objects: in using them in obedience to the idea of good, that is, in order to realize within us the ideal of the human personality in its fulness, we are in a sense endeavoring, as Kant expresses it, to *intellectualize the sensuous world*. Is not this exactly what the beautiful does, if it is defined as the intellectual made sensuous?

On the contrary, in my view, from this very definition results the fundamental difference between the two ideas. In one, the beautiful, the intellectual becomes sensuous, expresses itself through the sensuous: in the other, the good; it is, on the contrary, the sensuous which becomes intellectual. In the beautiful, if one may so express it, it is the idea which

is the matter, and the sensuous which is the form: in the good, on the contrary, it is the sensitive which is the matter, and the idea which is the form. While I have merely a general and abstract idea, I have only a primary matter: I give it an æsthetic form when I make it individual and concrete. On the contrary, the goods of the body, and all exterior goods, are merely the matter of the good in itself: it is the idea of perfection and excellence which gives them their form. Thus the intellectual and the sensuous both enter into the idea of the good and of the beautiful, but in an inverse order.

Another difference, connected with the preceding one, is that the beautiful is essentially impersonal and exterior: the good, on the contrary, is personal and interior. We say, *my* good: we do not say, *my* beautiful. In fact, it is generally believed that *my* good is not *the* good, and that it is opposed to it, as a personal to a general interest. But this is an error, which I have already refuted. What is called *the* good is only a generalization of what each one calls his good, and it is impossible for us to conceive how a being could be under obligation to strive for a good which was absolutely foreign to him. Doubtless we ought to sacrifice our individual interest to the general interest; but this is because our good is connected with the good of all, and is one with it, the most exalted good of man lying in his union with other men. In doing good, it is certain that we acquire for our souls an excellent good; that is, pity, clemency, respect for the rights of others: this is what makes a soul truly good; and virtue consists in acquiring these kinds of goods, which make our real treasure. Good is, then, something which we can acquire, accumulate, assimilate with ourselves — in a word, appropriate to ourselves: it is *in* us, and *belongs to* us. It is, then, personal and interior.

The beautiful, on the contrary, is impersonal and exterior. In respect to it, we can play but one part — that of observers. Even when we produce it, we produce it outside of ourselves,

as something which is not ourselves; and, when once it is produced, it is as much apart from us as from others; we can enjoy it only in contemplating it; we cannot appropriate it to ourselves, nor identify it with ourselves. Jouffroy has admirably depicted this impersonal character of the beautiful, and the never satiated passion which it excites in certain minds.[1]

By what precedes, we see how many objections there are to regarding the good and the beautiful as identical. To do so would be to make the æsthetic out-rank the moral sentiment within the soul, to place contemplation above action. Quietism is the danger of æsthetic morality. To admire is not to act. "In the Olympian games," says Aristotle, "the crown is won, not by the most beautiful, but by the bravest and the strongest."

It may be granted in regard to the beautiful as well as to the true, that at its source it is commingled with the good, in the sense that every thing finds its principle and its reason within the Supreme Being. But at this height every thing becomes vague, and escapes from our view. It is enough for science to define ideas under the direct relations which they sustain to us: to look higher, is to pass beyond the limits of the condition of humanity.

[1] Jouffroy, *Esthétique*, lecture fifth.

CHAPTER VII.

ABSOLUTE GOOD.

WE have followed out the analysis of good up to the point where moral science passes into metaphysics. As the human mind is always free to curb its curiosity at any point it chooses, we might, on arriving here, refuse to continue our researches, and thus avoid a difficult analysis. Those who think that nothing is accomplished while any thing remains to be done, and who will not voluntarily permit questions to be cut short by discouraging responses of the *non-admissible*, will soon perceive that the moral problem will lead them farther than they have expected, and that it passes into the metaphysical problem itself.

There is only one way in which to found a moral science absolutely independent of all metaphysics: it is by proclaiming the doctrine of pleasure or of utility.

If, indeed, you limit yourself to stating that there is one fact which is called pleasure, and another which is called pain; that there are several kinds of pleasures; that pleasure has several qualities — intensity, duration, security — and if, comparing pleasures and pains, you observe that a certain pleasure inevitably produces a certain pain, that a certain pain is the necessary condition of a certain pleasure; you may, by combining these elements, by making the future compensate for the present, or by guiding the present by the warnings of the past — you may, I say, found a sort of science, which Plato, as we have seen, calls *the metrics* of pleasure,[1] and which Bentham attempted to establish.

[1] See p. 11.

Moral science, then, becomes technological, an industry: it consists in governing and guiding phenomena in conformity with a given aim, which is, the greatest possible pleasure of the individual; just as the industrial arts combine and direct phenomena in conformity with natural laws, each one toward a definite end. Observation, experience, and calculation are then the methods of moral as well as of physical science; and every supersensible element disappears entirely. Thus transformed into an *industry*, an *art of voluptuousness*, a *practical prudence*, moral science is plainly as independent of metaphysics as is any other trade.

But moral science is not an industry: it is an art — not a mechanical art, in the service of pleasure, but a liberal art, in the service of the beautiful. It does not serve, it commands, as Aristotle has so well said of metaphysics. It distinguishes pleasures, as we have seen, not only by their quantity, but also by their quality: by this very act it rises above pleasure, and ascends to the idea of good itself. Pleasure is no longer the standard for good: it is good that is the standard for pleasure. Pleasures are mutually related as actions, and the best action is the source of the most excellent pleasure. If this is true, then, as we have already seen, there must be within things some good independent of our sensations; our faculties must be good in themselves, even before the existence of the pleasure which springs from them; and there must be degrees of excellence and dignity among them, which give the scale by which to estimate the different pleasures, and which are themselves determined by the nature of these faculties. Things have thus an effective value within themselves, which depends upon their essence, and is measured by this essence, not by the impressions which they make upon us. If nothing of this sort were true, it would be impossible to explain why one object ought to be preferred to another, and, consequently, why one action is better than another.

It will be said; It is not necessary to pass beyond the do-

main of experience to perceive that there is a difference in value between things belonging to the moral order. This is a fact which must be recognized, whether one attempts to draw metaphysical consequences from it, or not. It would be absurd to maintain that an act of heroism is not worth more than an act of selfishness.

I reply; The value of things is not a *fact*. No experience can demonstrate that one thing is worth more than another. In what balances will you place heroism and egotism to measure their respective worth? There are none. Doubtless it is a fact that men judge them thus; but, in forming this opinion, men spontaneously introduce into their judgment an element which is not empirical, which does not relate to the pure phenomenon, but which belongs to the essence of things; for it is absolutely and in itself that heroism is worth more than egotism. Moral *value* is not the same as economic *value*. The latter, which is merely a relation between two desires, can be measured accurately by the number of sacrifices which it will purchase; and these sacrifices themselves have a positive expression in what is called money. But is there any *money* in the moral order by which to pay for, and thus to value, the qualities of the soul? These qualities have an intrinsic worth, independent of the utility they may develop. Now, it is this utility merely which comes under the domain of experience: the essential value of acts belongs to another order. Hence arises the difference between *principles* and *facts*. If principles are not merely the resultants of facts, but should be the rule for them, it is because moral science is based upon an order of things which is not the order of phenomena and the senses, but is often the reverse of this. For example, from the stand-point of sensation, nothing is worth more than the preservation of life: from the moral stand-point, on the contrary, life is of less value than certain other goods — honor, justice, truth. These invisible goods, superior to tangible goods, prove clearly, that, beyond pure phenomena, there is something which is of more

value than they. Now, what do metaphysics say if not precisely this?

Undoubtedly, the goods which created beings offer us are only, in one sense, *relative* goods, for they are merely *degrees* of good; and, however exalted each of these degrees may seem to us, we can always find, or at the least can always conceive, their superiors. All the goods which life offers us are but secondary goods, beyond which we can always imagine higher ones. Even those which must be considered as possessing an absolute value, such as science, genius, and virtue, may always be imagined in a higher degree than any which experience shows us. Above the noblest human science, the loftiest genius, the purest virtue, we can conceive another science, another genius, another virtue. In this sense, once more, we may say that there are no goods but such as are relative.

But, in another sense, these relative goods are absolute; for they depend neither upon our taste, our sensations, nor our personal interest. Whether it pleases us, or not, heroism is a noble thing: purity of manners, veracity, devotion to science, are excellent. We cannot in any way alter at all the order of excellence of goods: we cannot desire that thought should be inferior to nutrition, friendship to selfishness, nobility of soul to servility. Thus, between these two things — that is, between moral qualities — there are necessary and absolute relations, just as there are between quantities. There is a moral arithmetic, to use Bentham's expression: only this arithmetic is not the calculation of pleasures. It is a valuation of another kind, but one which is no less sure, although it is less rigorous.

Before asking, then, whether there is an absolute good, a good in itself, superior to all relative goods, let us begin by showing that these relative goods have themselves a real and definite value, independent of human sensations, and that, however imperfect they may be, they have a characteristic perfection strictly commensurate with their degree of reality.

Only on this condition can we conceive the idea of progress, and of ascending evolution, which is to-day generally acknowledged as a law of humanity, and even of nature. How could it be affirmed that humanity has always advanced toward perfection, from the savage state up to its present condition; that nature itself has constantly followed an ascending line of march, from the state of diffusion by which it began, up to organization, life, feeling, thought, liberty, etc.? How, I say, could this doctrine of evolution, or progress, be intelligible, if we deny that there are in things comparative degrees of excellence and of perfection? And this gradation of excellence cannot be regarded as a gradation of pleasure: for, on the one hand, a plant seems to us superior to a stone, yet the plant feels no pleasure in this superiority. On the other hand, growth in excellence does not always involve an increase of pleasure. Often suffering increases with the superiority of the being, but the superiority of excellence is not diminished thereby. Sometimes, on the contrary, it even seems as though the suffering were itself a superior degree of excellence.

Now, from these two laws; First, that things differ, not only in quantity, but also in quality, in value, and in excellence; Second, that nature and humanity pass continually from lower goods to higher ones, and tend ceaselessly toward *the better* — from these two laws, we may conclude that in nature there is something more than the purely physical laws; or, *vice versa*, that if there were in nature only physical laws, these two laws would be unintelligible and inexplicable.

Indeed, were there a purely physical order of things — that is to say, one in which all phenomena could be brought under physical and mechanical laws, in which life, thought, will, liberty, and love were merely chemical combinations — on what ground, I ask, could one affirm that certain things are *worth* more than others; that one act is more excellent and noble than another; that love is worth more than selfishness, science than gluttony, the beautiful than the voluptu-

ous, nobility of soul than base flattery; in a word, that the goods of the soul are superior to those of the body, and the happiness of a man is superior to that of an animal?

From the stand-point of physical laws, one phenomenon is worth as much as any other; for every phenomenon is in strict conformity with the laws of nature. Nothing happens which is not conformable to these laws, consequently nothing which is not necessary and legitimate; and, as all phenomena are alike the result of necessary laws, all have exactly the same source and the same value. The hail which destroys the harvests falls by virtue of the same laws as does the rain which makes the earth fertile. The difference in effect does not at all alter the essence of the phenomena.

When you declare that certain actions are *better* than certain others, you can do so only because you attribute to one something more than to the other—because you discover in one something that is lacking in the other; but, if every thing is reduced to physical or chemical combinations, what is it which makes the privileged character of some actions, and leads us to declare them of a superior order? We might say that a certain action is useful, and another is injurious; but in themselves virtue and vice would be distinguished by no intrinsic character, and even, in certain emergencies, vice might seem more useful, and therefore better, than virtue.

Hence the only morality which would be intelligible under such circumstances would be the theory of pleasure. But if the theory of pleasure is inadequate, if there is above pleasure some element which cannot be reduced to pleasure, and which is the good, this element is the one which is lacking in this physico-chemical philosophy; and it is this element which constitutes morality.

The partisans of the physico-chemical[1] philosophy endeavor to explain the ascending degrees of nature and the progressive evolution of forms and faculties as being more

[1] By this I mean what is ordinarily called materialism.

and more complex forms of elementary phenomena. But complexity is by no means equivalent to perfection. A complicated imbroglio is not for this reason superior to a beautiful Grecian tragedy. The system of the world, although very simple, is an admirable thing; and Copernicus was led to discover its true system by the thought that the system of Ptolemy was too complicated. Undoubtedly, as one rises in the scale of being, more component parts are found; but there is also, as we have seen, more unity. It is not diversity alone (which would be merely disorder), but it is diversity brought under a plan, which makes perfection in the works of nature, as in those of art. Thus it is in proportion as we find more art in nature that we find more perfection there: and the reason why man appears to us to be superior to all the rest is, that in him we find, not only more art than in any other creature, but the very principle of art itself — will, feeling, thought; in one word, mind.

If complexity is not perfection; if the number and the complication of elements do not suffice to give to one combination any more value than belongs to another; if, relatively to the primitive laws of matter, all combinations are merely resultants having no mutual relations of excellence and of dignity — then how can physico-chemical philosophy explain the idea of good? Conversely, if there is in the human consciousness an idea of good; if there are comparative degrees for things and for actions, from the stand-point of beauty, of nobility, of dignity; if, moreover, these goods should be valued according to their intrinsic worth, and not according to the pleasure which they give — does not all this afford clear, although indirect, proof that nature is something else than a piece of physico-chemical mechanism, a fortuitous product of the elements, in a word, more than brute matter?

The physicists tell us that there is always in the universe the same quantity of force and the same quantity of matter; but, if there has always been the same amount of physical reality, has this always had the same degree of perfection?

Are the changes of condition through which it has passed, and which, physically speaking, are only recombinations of the same matter, displacements of the same force — are they nothing but simple changes? Are they not also a progress toward the better? And, if you advance to humanity, must we say that science, genius, heroism, art, liberty, thought itself, are nothing but displacements of matter and of force? And, if this were true, would not such combinations, even though they contained substantially nothing more than is found in a volcanic eruption or a shower of stones, would they not have a much higher *ideal* value? Now, whence could this worth, this increase in value, be derived, in a universe in which only physico-chemical forces were in action? If it is said that it is our own thoughts which give this value to things, where do our thoughts themselves find this standard, which cannot be tested by mathematical measures, by weight, level, or compass? The thought which can thus create such a standard, proves by so doing that it is of a different order and a different value from that which it measures.

Similar objections may be made to another theory, which is not materialism, but which seeks to break off all connection between morality and either metaphysics or religion. This is the theory of independent morality. If by independent morality is meant a science which, like all others, has what Aristotle calls its *characteristic principles*, principles which it derives directly from the human conscience, without deducing them from any anterior science; if it is merely affirmed that these principles — such as the distinction between good and evil, the law of duty, the principle of merit and demerit, etc. — are derived neither from the idea of a superior power nor from the idea of sanction, but that they have a value in themselves, even before we know that they emanate from an all-powerful will, and that they have the guaranty of that same will — then in that sense I freely admit the idea of independent morality. Still, I do not think that

even then it could be separated entirely (like physics or chemistry) from metaphysics or from religion.

Morality does not, like these, aim merely to ascertain facts, and establish general laws: it establishes *principles*. It is not even satisfied, like geometry, with stating these principles as self-evident, and deducing consequences from them. Its true object is to establish these principles, which it effects by the analysis of the ideas which are furnished to it by the natural instinct and by common sense. Now, just in proportion as it penetrates by analysis into the true meaning of these fundamental ideas which compose it, it penetrates also into the domain of metaphysics; and, whatever may be intended, its foundation is always metaphysical. If one says with Spinoza, that good consists in passing from a lesser *reality* to a greater *reality;* with Aristotle, that the good of a being lies in the *activity* suitable to him; with Wolf, that good consists in *perfection;* with Kant, that the human personality is *sacred*, that is, that it has an *absolute value*, that it is an *end in itself*, and not a *means* — all these ideas, *reality*, *activity*, *perfection*, *absolute*, *end*, etc., are metaphysical. Most certainly the two sciences should not be confounded; but moral science cannot dispense with these ideas, and they form its basis.

Some will say that moral science does not borrow these ideas from metaphysics, but that, on the contrary, it supplies them to the latter. Just as the natural sciences give to metaphysics the ideas of space, of law, of substance, as psychology gives it the ideas of causation and of time, so moral science furnishes the idea of perfection. Each of these sciences assumes the truth of certain elementary ideas whose nature, origin, and influence they do not investigate. Those who desire to solve the problem may try, if they wish, to follow up the stream to its source; but the sciences which supply these first requisites do not need to go back so far. They carry their own light within themselves, and would only be compromised if they should concern themselves with

the problems which belong to the most contested of all the sciences.

It appears to me unimportant to decide whether moral science furnishes its fundamental ideas to metaphysics, or borrows them from it. I am inclined to believe, historically, that, in proportion as a higher idea of the human soul is developed within men, their conceptions of the supreme cause have become more and more perfect. In Greece, moral science killed polytheism: in proportion also as they constantly saw the end of their desires withdrawing farther from them, as they sought after a more and more noble, and more and more distant, happiness, they gradually conceived of a supreme end, identical with the ultimate cause. I also heartily agree with Kant, that one must pass from morals to theodicy, and that the surest road to God is the sentiment of ideal perfection which takes possession of the human conscience, blended with the contemplation of the material universe. But, in my opinion, there is a path which returns from the supreme verity to moral verity. If analysis leads from the moral to the religious idea, synthesis descends again from the religious to the moral idea. God is the surety for morality — not in the gross and common meaning, that he stands ready to assure us the price and recompense, as though we feared we might make a fool's bargain by being virtuous gratuitously, but in the nobler and true sense, that his existence bears witness that we are not consecrating our lives to a chimera, or a dream of the imagination.

The primary fact on which the defenders of independent morality rely is, they say, that of the *inviolability of the human personality*, as they express it. But this is not a fact like any other, for it involves right and duty.; that is to say, *that which is not*, but *which ought to be!* How can *that which ought to be*, be a fact? If every thing were reducible to a chain of physical causes, how could there be any other law than the law of that which is? In the physical order, that which is, should be, and every thing that can be, is. Morality,

then, evidently assumes the existence of some other order than the purely physical one — an order which is ideal and intellectual, mingled with the physical order, contradicted and unceasingly opposed by this physical and mechanical order, and one which the free will endeavors to disengage and deliver. But is not this clear proof that man belongs to two orders, to two kingdoms, and that, if his feet are plunged in the physical order, his head rises into an order which is intelligible and divine?

Behold, in this physical and necessary world there suddenly appears a free and inviolable personality: what can this be but a miracle — a miracle of chance and blind fatality — unless this free personality is the expression, the emanation, the prophetic image, of another kingdom, which Kant has admirably called the *reign of ends*, and which has its laws like any other? Whither runs this *noble root* of duty, of which Kant speaks? Whence does it spring? On what is it nourished, since it has nothing in common with the inclinations, passions, appetites, or any thing which comes to us from without? This inner, this inviolable man, has, then, some participation in the *absolute*, since it is *absolutely* forbidden to assail him.

The conception of an ideal — that is to say, of something infinitely superior to any thing which exists — is, then, essential to moral science. Moral science assumes, that, in each particular case, above the action to which nature inclines us, there is another possible and better one, more conformable to the essence of man, and which reason commands us to perform. True human science is not, then, the simple reflex of human nature. The true man is not the same as the actual man. For example, the latter loves life, and will sacrifice any thing to preserve it: the former, on the contrary, will sacrifice every thing, even his life, for something other than himself; and it is he who is in the right.

Let them now explain to us whence can come this thought of a type, a model, an ideal, with which we compare our

actions, and by which we judge them. Must it not at least be admitted that there is in this whole of which we make a part, in this universe which envelops us, a tendency toward the better, an evolution which leads step by step up to the being in whom this tendency becomes self-conscious and obligatory? Above nature and its necessary and brutal laws there will, then, be at least the *idea*, which guides and animates it, and gives to it its value. A heap of stones is merely a heap of stones; but let these stones be arranged to form a triumphal arch, a portal, a pedestal, etc., and they will thenceforth acquire a meaning and an excellence which they did not previously possess. What, then, is this thing, which is neither matter nor force, but which transfigures matter and force by transforming them into its instruments? It is the thought or idea. It must, therefore, be admitted, that there is in nature a thought, an idea, by whatever name it may be called. As man has his idea, that is his essence, his model, his verity which alone gives value to his life, worth to his actions, hope and consolation in his misery, must not the entirety of nature also (man being included) have its Idea, its Essence, its verity (whether immanent or transcendent we will leave the metaphysicians to discuss), in one word, its reason, which, I repeat, is not limited to brute matter with its elementary properties?

Let them say, if they will, that this ideal is a conception of the human mind; one of two things is true: either they mean by this a purely chimerical and arbitrary conception, created by the imagination and a vague desire, a sort of mirage of the passions — and we should be insane were we to sacrifice to such a dream the imperfect but palpable happiness which we could derive from interest, properly understood; or else we are really under obligation to make such a sacrifice. But in the latter case this ideal must have its foundations laid in our very essence, it must be more real than actuality itself; and, if so, it is this verity which is the true reality: in a word, beyond the apparent and phenomenal

reality, beyond the visible and manifest being, there must be the true being, in which we are conscious of participating, and which we ought to resemble as closely as possible. Undoubtedly the *ideal man*, the *man in himself* of Plato, and the *wise man* of the Stoics, are but abstract models created by our minds, and possessing no objective reality; but these conceptions are formed by the combination which we make of the idea of the real man, and the idea of the absolute Being. The ideal man would, then, be the greatest possible participation of the real man in the absolute Being. But if there were nothing in the universe but matter and its laws, where would we find the material necessary for the formation of the idea of this model and of this type, whose tributaries we recognize ourselves to be?

An eminent thinker of our time has remarked that it is impossible to deny the existence of an infinite, absolute, universal Being — in a word, of a primal Being — but that by calling this Being a perfect Being, as spiritualistic philosophers generally do, he is at once transformed into a sort of ideal model, having no more effective reality than the perfect circle, the perfect sage, the perfect state, etc. But the learned author did not, perhaps, observe that the word perfection may be defined in two ways: sometimes it is used as an ideal model, a sort of *à priori* test by which we figure things to ourselves, leaving out of account their concrete conditions of existence. This is the sense in which the word is used by our author, and so he is quite right in saying that the perfect Being is an imaginary model like all the others. But in another sense, which our author has not sufficiently considered, and which was the Cartesian sense, the word *perfection* expresses every effective quality of things. For example, intelligence is a perfection, liberty is a perfection; in a lesser degree, love, desire, and sensation are perfections; even extent, so far as it has reality, is called a perfection, in the Cartesian terminology. I myself, when establishing, as a principle of moral science, excellence or

perfection, did not understand by this merely an ideal model, but an effective quality of objects unequally distributed among them: hence I admitted that there are relative perfections, and that some degrees of perfection are superior to others. And when we speak of the progressive evolution of beings, which is a doctrine dear to the author whom we are considering, we assume thereby that nature is constantly perfecting herself; that, to use Leibnitz' expression, she marches from perfection to perfection is an endless progress. Perfection thus understood is given to us as a reality, and not merely as an ideal; it is not opposed to reality by a necessary antithesis, but it is reality itself; and, as Spinoza has said, reality and perfection are one and the same thing.

Beings are, then, distinguished one from another only by their degree of perfection, and they have precisely as much being as perfection. Perfection is even the sole effective content which the idea of being embraces. Take this away, and there remains the empty idea of existence, or the dead idea of substance. It is neither existence nor substance which constitutes the thing: these are its attributes, and that is what is called perfection. The nearer you approach to the absolute, the richer and more complete does the idea of the Being become. Absolute Being is not the *void*, but the *fulness*. It is, then, perfection itself; and moral perfection is simply the progressive participation of human nature in the universal and sovereign perfection.

Thus, setting out with moral science, we reach with Plato those luminous heights to which he was the first to conduct mankind, and which can never be lost from view without losing at the same time that which makes the joy and the glory of life, which gives virtue a foundation, not only because she finds here a well-grounded hope, but because she feels herself freed from the impious doubt which pressed heavily upon her so long as she inquired whether she herself, like the passions, were not a folly of another order, and

whether, as between those who seek the good and those who seek pleasure, the wiser ones are not they who seek utility.

"In the outer limits of the intelligible world [says Plato] is the idea of good; an idea which is perceived with difficulty, but which, when perceived, compels the conclusion that it is the ultimate cause of every thing beautiful and good that is found in the universe: that in the visible world it produces light, and the star from which this directly comes; that in the invisible world it gives rise to truth and intelligence; finally, that we must have our eyes steadfastly fixed upon this idea if we wish to conduct ourselves wisely in public or private life."[1]

Let us briefly summarize the results of our analysis of the idea of good.

We have distinguished *natural* or *essential* good from *moral* good. The latter, as Kant has shown, can be only the consequence of moral obligation or of duty: the former is its foundation.

This first book, then, treats only of that which is naturally and essentially good — good in itself.

To discover the nature of good in itself we began with the analysis of pleasure; pleasure led us to the conception of excellence or perfection, and this to the conception of happiness; and we have defined good as *the identity of happiness and of perfection* — a principle which embraces all the others, the principle of human personality, that of fraternity, that of the universal order, that of the imitation of God.

In fact, since God is the source of all excellence and all beatitude, to increase in one's self or in others the sum of excellent goods is to approach God, it is to *imitate* him, which is impossible without *loving* him. It is, in truth, the love of absolute good which renders all relative goods pleasing to us.

At the same time, it is *to conform one's self to the universal order;* for, without knowing any thing about this order, we feel assured that it can consist only in the unlimited growth of *good*. It is also to conform to the *divine will*, which can

[1] Plato, *Repub.*, l. vii.

be nothing else than the love of good. It is to labor to promote the *general interest*, for the true perfection and the true happiness of each individual are found in the perfection and the happiness of all.

Finally, it is to develop the moral person, for the most excellent thing in ourselves and in others is *personality*, and this is the basis of our true *happiness;* for happiness, as we have seen, consists in our personal excellence, which, again, is inseparable from our union with humanity and with God.

Thus our principle satisfies all the requirements of the moral problem, and it reconciles all theories. But there still remains the task of testing and verifying it by its consequences. This will be the object of the following investigations.

BOOK SECOND.

THE LAW OR DUTY.

CHAPTER I.

NATURE AND BASIS OF THE MORAL LAW.

FROM the idea of *good*, which is the object, the aim, the end, of human actions, we pass next to the idea of *duty*, which is the law, the rule, and, as Kant expresses it, the *form*, of these same actions. From that part of moral science which we have called, to distinguish it clearly, *objective* moral science, we pass to that other part, which, for the same purpose, we will call *formal* moral science, reserving for a third part of this treatise the study of the *subjective* conditions of morality. Doubtless it is true that these distinctions are artificial, and are based upon abstractions; but these abstractions are of use in giving precision to our ideas. For example, the law of duty necessarily presupposes the existence of an agent capable of knowing and of applying it, endowed, therefore, with conscience and with liberty. Without such subjective conditions, there could be no duty; but, nevertheless, we can consider the law of our actions abstractly, without taking account of these conditions. Again, there is an objective element in the idea of law; for we can contemplate it in itself, in its universal and absolute character, before studying it in the human conscience, where it is modified by the degree of light present, and by the feelings. Thus the *formal* should precede the *subjective* in the analysis of the principles of morality. Now, this form or rule of all our actions is what mankind generally calls duty.

Here we find several questions to be considered: First, Is there any such law? Second, In what does it consist? what is its essence, its definition? Third, On what foundation

does it rest? what is the principle of that which is generally called moral obligation?

§ I. *Existence of the Law of Duty.*

The philosopher Schopenhauer claims that the idea of duty should be eliminated from moral science; that it is a superficial and merely popular principle, which is not supported by any really philosophical arguments.[1] According to him, moral science is not a *practical* science, as it has been said to be: it is purely *theoretical.* Like every other science, it deals with that which is, not that which ought to be. That which is, is the fact that there are good men and bad men. The principle of good is the *pity* which men have for one another: the principle of evil is insensibility, hardness of heart, cruelty. Among men, some are born with humane sentiments, others with selfish ones. Moral science describes the habits of men, just as natural history does those of animals: there are good and bad men, just as there are sheep and tigers. It also determines the principle of approbation or disapprobation, which is nothing but sympathy. But it issues no commands, it gives no orders; for the idea of an order, of a commandment, involves the existence of an impossible free will. The moral law is, in reality, simply a metaphysical transformation of the theological principle of the divine will. Instead of a God who commands, you have an abstract law, a formal rule, to which is attributed a sort of will, and which is made to say, *Sic volo, sic jubeo,* like an all-powerful law-giver. But, if one is going to admit the existence of any order coming from on high, it would be more rational to make that order emanate from a personal and sovereign will, than to suppose that there is a law without any legislator; "suspended," as Kant has said, "between

[1] Schopenhauer, *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik,* Leipsic, 1860. The same philosopher also criticises, and even bitterly ridicules, the idea of *dignity* (die Würde), which plays such an important part in Kant's philosophy, regarding it as a sentimental and anti-philosophical idea.

heaven and earth," having its origin neither in the nature of man — since they deny that it is derived from our instincts — nor in God; since they leave in suspense the question of his existence.

I myself observed, in criticising the philosophy of Kant, that it seems in certain respects to be the theological doctrine of *absolute decrees* under a new form. But this criticism applies merely to the special form in which Kant has expressed the doctrine of duty: it does not affect the idea of duty in itself. As soon as one admits the existence of good (in whatever way it may be defined), one cannot refuse to admit also that this good, just so far as it is perceived by human consciousness, is obligatory, and becomes a duty. Let us suppose, for example, with Schopenhauer, that pity is the essential principle of morals; suppose, that, since all men have, as he maintains, only one and the same essence, the good of others is our own individual good: then I say that we would feel ourselves obliged to promote the good of other men, or at the least to prevent them from suffering, even when our passions were drawing us in a direction contrary to that of pity. The philosopher is as much exposed to passions as other men are, whether to vengeance, envy, or any other. Now, if such a passion be roused within him, the feeling of pity being quiescent or obliterated, while yet there exists within him the *idea* of that which, when free from passion, he considers as the good, so long as this idea remains, however feeble may be his pity, however strong his anger, it is impossible that he should feel it permissible to yield to his *strongest* passion, while that which his conscience tells him is *the better*, remains torpid. But to say that it is not permissible, is the same as saying that it is forbidden, which implies that the contrary is ordered, commanded, not by an arbitrary will, but by his own reason, which requires him to choose that which appears to him good instead of that which seems worse, whether it pleases him or not, and whether he does, or does not, feel the sentiments which harmonize with this obligation.

No moral science which is not utilitarian can escape the idea of moral obligation. For even if the good was at the first revealed to us by a sentiment, as every one admits that this sentiment is not always of equal force, that it has its periods of intermittence, of languor, and, still more, that it is easily overpowered by passion, there remains in the absence of this constraining sentiment an idea which replaces and recalls it, and which, in spite of passion, commands and dictates; what is this but duty? I will grant that at first men gave the name of good to actions determined by sympathy, and that thus they formed this general and abstract idea, that good consists, in general, in sympathizing with the sufferings of others. But from this general principle I deduce this rule: Act in such a way that you may sympathize to the greatest possible extent with other men. When a contrary passion arises within me, this rule does not cease to be present; it combats within me the claims of the contrary passion; it condemns it, and by so doing *orders* me to reject it. It is a *categorical imperative.*

To reject the idea of duty under the pretext that the free will is impossible, is poor reasoning, for we do not know whether a free will is possible or impossible; but we do know very well, that, when we consider a good action (so far as we recognize it as such), we feel ourselves under obligation to perform it, and that, when we consider a bad action, we feel ourselves obliged to abstain from it. If this necessity implies the existence of a free will, it is an argument in favor of it. But we cannot reason conversely, and reject a plainly evident truth for the sake of avoiding a consequence which is metaphysically disagreeable.

Another school, that of Charles Fourier, which gives more attention to social philosophy than to strictly moral science, has also rejected the idea of duty as being irrational, and even contrary to divine wisdom and goodness. What a strange idea it is, says Fourier, to maintain that God has implanted within us passions in order that we may repress

them; as though a father were to develop vices in his child so that he may afterwards have the glory of overcoming them! What could be less in conformity with the economy of divine wisdom than to create a self-contradictory being, composed of two natures, one of which is commanded to reduce the other to vassalage, while everywhere else in the universe we see unity of source and unity of action? And it would not be so bad had God but given us at the same time efficacious means with which to combat them! But we have nothing of the sort. Every one knows how weak is reason in the presence of passion, and that those who preach to others are the first to be vanquished in this struggle with themselves. The worst evil is not their weakness, which comes from nature, and for which they are not responsible, but it is the universal hypocrisy which results from this conflict between theory and practice; since all have continually on their lips moral maxims which they sacrifice without scruple when there is any question of satisfying their passions. Fourier does not go so far as to deny that there may be, exceptionally, some virtuous men on the earth. But the rarity of these exceptions proves that this is not the true destiny of the human race; for would so many millions of men have been created in order that an imperceptible number might attain the end? From these considerations Fourier concludes that human destiny is not duty, but happiness, and that happiness consists in the perfect satisfaction of the passions. Only, in order that man may attain this free scope without injury to himself or to others, it is necessary to discover the true mechanism of the play of the passions; and to this discovery Fourier devoted himself. Let this mechanism be once discovered, and set in operation, and man would thenceforward need only to yield to his natural impulses, in order to be in harmony with himself and with others!

It is clear that the difficulty of this problem lies in the discovery whether there is any such passional mechanism

that men, while freely yielding to their passions, may yet be in harmony with themselves and with society. That such a mechanism really exists can be shown only by experience; and, until it is thus demonstrated, no one is obliged to believe it. Now, if we examine the mechanism which Fourier thought he had discovered, we see that it consists exclusively of what he calls "*la serie rivalisée, engrenée et exaltée*" (the series brought into rivalry, supplied with work, and ennobled) — in a word, in the distribution of industrial labor, according to vocations, among affiliated groups, rivalling each other through the analogy of their functions, succeeding each other in labors of short duration, and reciprocally exchanging their members according to the diversity of operations, all being animated in their work by the combined attractions of the senses and of the soul. But, to say nothing of the utopian and artificial character of such combinations, their most striking feature is the disproportion of the means to their ends. How can it be hoped that a mere mechanical disposition of groups will suffice to deprive passions of all their sharpness, to prevent one from desiring more than others, and more than properly belongs to him, and to hinder the sensual passions from ruling over the inclinations of the soul, and causing man to descend below himself? There is notably one passion, that of love, whose free exercise it seems impossible to imagine save as producing a warfare of each against all, and assailing the sweetest and noblest feelings of human nature. Doubtless it will always be wise to place man, so far as it is possible, in such an environment, that his feelings and his interests will be in accord with his duties; and the merit of difficulties overcome ought not to be needlessly sought for in morals, since there will always remain difficulties enough to test our strength. But that any exterior mechanism could suffice to relieve man from all necessity for effort, and make him free to enjoy his nature and his faculties, like the tree which grows and the water which runs, seems contrary to all experience; and,

until it is demonstrated to be true, it should be regarded as a pure chimera.

Meantime, until this paradisaical state is attained, what is left for man, if not to distinguish within himself what he has in common with the brutes, from that which distinguishes him from them — his sensual appetites from the affections of his heart, or his lofty aspirations toward the impersonal goods of the true and the beautiful? Did Fourier himself, to answer him by an argument *ad hominem*, obey a purely animal instinct when he devoted his modest life and his poverty to cherishing the dream which might, as he believed, save humanity? Thus all things within man are not of equal value: the passions should not all be placed on the same footing; there are the more and less noble; some are better than others. Since this is so, until the existence of that social mechanism which is, hypothetically, to relieve me of all responsibility (supposing that such a condition were desirable, which question I will not investigate), it belongs to me to make the better sentiments within me predominant over those that are worse; and even if the former should be, either temporarily or habitually, less intense in me than the latter, I feel myself under none the less obligation to do my utmost to bring my conduct into harmony with the former, rather than with the latter. In other words, the idea of good, rather than that of passion, presents itself to my will as an ideal which I cannot ignore; and this necessity of a special kind is precisely what is called duty; and that which commands us to recognize this necessity is reason. Now, what contradiction is there in saying that an intelligent being is commanded by the Creator, not to dry up within himself the very springs of action — that is to say, the passions, which is a thing no reasonable moralist ever maintained — but to lift himself by his personal efforts from a lower to a higher state, like a man who starts to ascend a steep mountain? And whether there are few or many among us who attain the aim, does not affect the nature of the aim, which remains

the same for all, and without the knowledge of which, no one would attempt to approach it. As to the responsibility of each one, that is measured, not by his success, but by the effort which he makes: now, as to this effort, we have no means of measuring that which is made by other men; we cannot even measure that which is made by ourselves. Hence we cannot tell how much virtue there is in humanity: and this is of little importance, since we are not called upon to judge, but to act.

It is not, then, difficult to demonstrate, that, in the actual state of the human consciousness, there is something which is called duty — that is to say, an obligatory rule of action; but what is less clear and simple is the question whether the idea of duty is a primitive and essential idea of human nature, founded objectively upon the nature of things, and not rather an acquired idea, born of civilization, and successively transmitted, growing by habit, and by the authority of tradition.

Some have, indeed, attempted to show that the idea of duty is developed in a purely historical way.[1]

Mankind, they say, began by yielding to their senses and their appetites; but no long time was needed for experience to teach them, as it does even animals, that certain things are injurious, although agreeable to the senses, while others are useful, though they are painful and disagreeable. Moreover, men have a natural sympathy which inclines them toward one another; and they spontaneously obey the instinct of kindness and of pity. From this twofold source, from interest and sympathy, morals were born. Men became accustomed to abstain from certain actions, to try to perform others, to approve and to blame, according as these actions were in conformity with, or were contrary to, sympathy or interest. As mankind is gifted with the faculty of making abstractions and

[1] This is the theory of the English psychological school, of Mill, Bain, etc., as well as of the naturalists who seek the origin of morals in natural history; Darwin (*Descent of Man*), Lubbock (*History of Civilization*), and also of all biologists who advocate more or less strongly the ideas of positivism. See also the remarkable work of M. Ribot, *Sur l'Hérédité Psychologique*. Paris, 1873.

of generalizing, and with that of fixing their abstractions in language, certain general maxims were made, certain rules which men became accustomed to obey; and as all men, or the greater part of them, passed through the same, or nearly the same, experiences, the same practices passed from one to another. Thus men formed maxims which grew more and more abstract and general; and these rules, losing more and more the personal and individual character which they had at first, took the form of laws, of universal and impersonal principles.[1] These principles were transmitted by tradition as self-evident truths; and, as the new generations were not conscious of having formed this sort of maxims for themselves, from their own personal experience, they were regarded as absolute and necessary verities, inherent in human nature — in a word, as innate truths, because their historical origin had been lost sight of in the night of time.

It is thus that they explain the *universal* character of the idea of duty: let us see how they explain its *obligatory* character.

When men had formed the general laws of which we speak, for their own personal benefit, they were led to impart them to one another; for it is well known that men readily transform into laws their personal inclinations. Now, men are either equal or unequal: if they are equal, they give each other *counsels;* but, if they are unequal, they give each other *orders.* Thus, for example, parents, wishing to see their children escape all the trials and miseries through which they had passed themselves, gave them beforehand a synopsis of the rules of experience; and these they presented in the form of orders, as the expression of an imperative necessity which it was impossible to escape. In the same way, the chiefs of peoples, whether legislators, priests, or warriors, having an

[1] The earliest *maxims* which have been preserved — such, for example, as those of the Grecian sages, of the gnomic poets, and those contained in the poems of Homer and of Hesiod (to speak only of Grecian antiquity) — are of this sort.

interest in the preservation of the society of which they were the rulers, either for self-interest or for humanity's sake, prescribed, under the form of orders and laws, every thing that experience had taught to them and to their fathers, as to the means of preserving life and making it happy. Doubtless, to these maxims of general interest the princes of the people may have added others, which concerned only their individual interests, and which were even directly opposed to the interest of their subjects. This is very probable, and is even demonstrated by what remains to us of these primitive codes; and the philosophers of the eighteenth century took occasion from this to declare that these first founders of society were only hypocrites and tyrants. But, whatever share selfishness and oppression may have had in the first human legislation, the fact that these societies were permanent proves that the greater number of these primitive laws were really useful to the people; for they could have endured only by virtue of certain conservative principles, and these are the principles which afterwards formed the basis of moral science. Finally, at the same time that these rules of wisdom were enjoined upon the family by domestic, and in the state by political, authority, they were also enjoined by religious authority, which in those early days was not distinct from the political power; so that every thing which man holds most sacred — the father, the prince, the priest, and God — commanded the same things at the same time: wise men disseminated and communicated these rules by speech, by poetry, and by instruction. Moral laws do not, then, present themselves merely as general and speculative truths, but as commands; and they always emanate from some will, either sacred or secular. We understand very well to-day what power the association of impressions and of ideas has over human beliefs. These rules, always accompanied by orders, assumed the character of necessary and obligatory laws. Now that we have forgotten the wills which at first commanded them, we still continue to regard them as commands; and as they

are really in close conformity with reason, since they are the result of a long and unanimous experience, it is quite natural that we should regard them as having been dictated *à priori* by reason itself — as the work of an internal legislation without any legislator.[1]

It is unnecessary to recall, in support of this interpretation, the history of moral ideas, the argument, so frequently appealed to, of their fluctuations, their variability, and even of their contradictions from age to age, among one people and another. As a matter of course, these facts, so often quoted by sceptics as arguments against the existence of any moral law, can and will be equally cited for the support of every theory which for any reason whatever affirms the empirical origin of moral ideas.

This historical theory of duty would undoubtedly have the advantage — most valuable to the utilitarian school — of explaining how the empirical origin of our moral maxims has come to be obscured and effaced in the human consciousness, and how principles which were at first merely relative and conditional rules, have developed in the course of time into universal and absolute principles. Such a transformation is not impossible. But it must be admitted, that, just so soon as it is ascertained that they have such an origin, these tradi-

[1] This explanation is nearly identical with that given by Mr. Kirchmann (*Die Grundbegriffe des Rechts und der Moral*, 1869). According to this author, morality originates in the sentiment of *respect* (*Achtung*) which man feels in the presence of a power which he feels to be immeasurably stronger than himself. This power becomes for him an *authority* whose commands constitute the moral law. These authorities may be reduced to four — that of God, of the prince, of the people, and of the father of the family. All morality is positive, and is based solely on the will of some authority. These ideas are not very novel. Like all theories of this kind, they destroy morality in attempting to explain it; and upon this rock they suffer shipwreck. For either this respect for authority is an instinct of a kind superior to the other instincts, and it is this very superiority, this intrinsic excellence, which forms the basis of morality, in which case it is not derived from authority; or else this instinct is only a feeling like the others, and why should I sacrifice them to it? Why should I make my interest and my pleasure subordinate to that of others? There would be no reason whatever for doing so. The increase of knowledge should then free us from the prejudices and tyranny of morality.

tional maxims should re-assume their primitive character of relative and individual truths, having no value with any one except such as he thinks proper to accord to them. The hereditary and authoritative transmission of the idea of good and of evil may explain the habit of obedience, but it cannot explain its actual necessity. The traditional command of all those who have preceded us is by no means a decisive motive for our action. Undoubtedly, prudence teaches us not to act in opposition to ideas which have been accepted for a long time, and it will always be wise to be cautious how we abandon them. But, after all, I have a right to examine, and to reject after examination, those rules which are based only upon tradition and custom. I ought, then, to be able to emancipate myself from the moral law and the authority of duty, just as the world has emancipated itself in politics from the idea of the divine right of kings, and in philosophy from the authority of Aristotle.

Now, just here lies the power of duty, that, with the greatest desire to emancipate ourselves from its control, we cannot do so, but we continue to recognize a moral truth: we require others to perform duties, and recognize our own obligation to do so; we do not wish to be suspected of injustice, of cruelty, or of disloyalty. Thus the authority of duty still exists, even when its mystical origin has been denied and rejected. This should not be so: the idea of duty ought to disappear, like that of phlogiston. Let each act as he thinks best: this should be the only rule. Nevertheless, this is not accepted. Each wishes to be in harmony with the moral conscience of mankind, and with his own individual conscience. Such harmony is incomprehensible if duty is merely the result of education and habit.

Experience, it is said, has taught us that there are good men and wicked men: we approve of the former, because they do good to us; and we disapprove of the others, because they do us harm. This might explain why we do not wish other people to be wicked, but it does not explain why

we do not wish to be so ourselves. Undoubtedly, I ought to dread bad men because they may injure me; but why should I dread to be wicked myself? I have, for instance, a profound aversion to the shedding of human blood: hence the idea of shedding blood is terrible to me. But if at the same time I have a desire, an ardent desire, to possess riches, why do I say that the former of these two instincts is of an order superior to the second? And, if I do say this, does it not at once follow that I *ought* to prefer it? Thus the idea of duty is explained without recourse to any historical hypothesis. If, on the contrary, I maintain that there is no such thing as a primitive and essential duty, is not this the same as saying that there is within me no instinct superior to other instincts; that the love of the true, or of the beautiful, or of my country, or my parents, or my children, is in no way superior to the appetites of the senses? Hence the only rule possible would be this: Yield to your strongest appetite, taking precautions against any unpleasant consequences; or, if you do not care about the consequences, do whatever you like.

We can easily imagine a state of society in which, by the development of the arts and the growing complexity of civilization, it should become possible to combine the advantages of vice with those of security and external order. For example, it is certain that in a large city conjugal infidelity has a thousand ways of concealing itself, which are not found in a small town. Thus one can imagine a society in which marriage would preserve all its material and external advantages, while a very great license of manners would exist without any danger. So, too, in such a society, there are a thousand ways of making money pass from one pocket to another, without resorting to the vulgar methods of the common pickpocket. So, also, there may be ways of regulating and directing a voluptuous life so that it shall not cease to be voluptuous, and yet shall not injure the health, as coarse debauchery does. If men should thus succeed, little by little,

by means of art and experience, in escaping the greater part of the disagreeable consequences which the traditional wisdom of nations associates with what is called vice, what criterion would remain by which the Utilitarians could distinguish vice from virtue?

Hence, even if the empirical school should find an historical explanation of the idea of obligation, it would always fail to meet the real difficulty, which is the explanation of its existence in the present day. To say that this idea rests solely upon education and habit, is to suppress it entirely. To suppress it, is to destroy all law; and destruction is not explanation.

Moreover, the historical evolution of the idea of duty is no argument against its reality. We do not need to call in the aid of natural history and zoölogical archæology to show that humanity did not at first have the same idea of duty that we have at the present time. It is quite sufficient to consider an individual man — the germination, the unfolding, the development, of moral ideas in a child. We know that every thing begins as an instinct: we know that habit and education unite with instinct in forming and developing all our ideas. But, though an idea may pass through a certain empirical evolution, it does not by any means follow that it is merely its resultant, without a true existence of its own. Thus it may be granted that the first instincts of man in a primitive state are, as we still see them among uncivilized peoples, not very different from the instincts of animals. But that which characterizes the human species is the power of raising itself above this state, so nearly like that of the animals, up to a higher plane, and, when it has reached this, the ability to see that it is no longer permissible to fall below it: this, then, is duty. Thus the more closely we endeavor to approximate the social state of primitive man and that of the animals, the more clearly do we bring out that which to-day raises us above that condition, while we throw into higher relief the law which forbids us to relapse into it.

It should also be observed, that this zoölogical theory of morality is opposed to utilitarianism, rather than favorable to it; for, in the animals themselves, we observe instincts of affection, and devotion, and social feelings, by which the individual seems to make his own interest subordinate to the good of another, or to the general good. Now, if this is true of animals, how much more so should it be of men, who are capable of comprehending the beauty and excellence of the social instincts, and their superiority to those which are selfish! It is the characteristic of man that he is able to comprehend this superiority; and, when once he has understood it, he cannot, without self-reproach, prefer his own interest to that of his kindred, his friends, his country, and mankind. What does this self-reproach signify? That he did wrong in yielding to his selfishness. Why was it wrong? Because unselfishness is better. But this explanation does not suffice; since health is also better than sickness, and yet one does not reproach one's self for being ill. I blame myself only for that which I could have avoided. But even this is not enough; for though, in leaving a room, I may set my right foot or my left foot first, I do not therefore blame myself for doing this in one way rather than in the other. In fact, I blame myself only for that which I *might*, and at the same time *ought*, to have avoided. Duty is the law which constrains me whenever, by means of my reason, I have comprehended the superiority of one sentiment to another, of the general good to the good of the individual, of the goods of the soul to those of the body, etc. Thus the existence of the law of duty is not made doubtful, even should it be shown hypothetically that the germs of our moral instincts exist in the animals, which I do not think has yet been demonstrated. But even though humanity may have passed through a stage of incubation, like that of the child in the womb of its mother, or of the infant in the cradle, it does not follow that this primitive or rudimentary life is the type of human life when emancipated and developed. Moral science concerns itself with man

as he is, and not as he might have been; and within this man as he is, we find the germ and the idea of that which he ought to be.

Whatever may be the historical origin of human morality, let us, then, admit that in the actual consciousness of humanity, or, at least, in that of the noblest groups of humanity, there exists the idea of a general and universal *form* for our actions, of a *law* which claims control of the reason, and commands the will. Let us examine a little more closely the *nature* of this law, its *basis* and its *character*.

§ II. *Of the Nature of Duty.*

Duty, says Kant, is "the necessity of obedience to the law from respect for the law." This fine definition should be retained in science as the most exact expression of the moral law which has ever been given. Let us try to understand it thoroughly.

By *law* I mean a constant rule according to which actions or phenomena are produced, or should be produced: the first is true if the agent is not free; the second if he is free, and is able, consequently, to violate the law. To the first class belong all physical and natural laws. Man, as a physical being, is subject to a great many laws of this sort; moreover, as a member of society, he is subject to civil and political laws; as an intellectual being, he is subject to psychological and logical laws; finally, as a free and voluntary agent, he is subject to the law of interest, properly understood, and to the moral law. Here we have many distinct laws. Now, if we ask how a moral law is distinguished from all the others which have been mentioned, and why we cannot confound it with any other (or why it is a primitive idea in the consciousness), we find that the essential characteristic of this law is, that, in acting according to it, we are obliged to have no motive but the law itself. This is not true of the other laws; and this special and original characteristic of the moral law, or the law of duty, is what is called *obligation*.

If we consider physical laws, for example, we shall see that they are inevitably carried out, though the agent is not compelled to know them, nor, consequently, to respect them. When bodies fall, they do not do so out of respect for the law of gravitation, for they do not know this law: even when they come to a knowledge of it (as is the case with mankind), they will continue to fall with a speed which is uniformly accelerated without any regard to their knowledge. This law, properly speaking, is not the reason of the action, but merely its expression. Bodies are what they are, and they act according to that which they are: the constant mode of this action we call a law.

Man, in so far as he is a physical being, is subject to all the laws of nature, like all the other beings in the universe: like them, he obeys perfectly, but not out of respect for them, these laws which he cannot infringe upon. The same is true of psychological laws. These laws merely express the nature of the soul: they are not commands laid upon the will. Thus they are fulfilled spontaneously and inevitably; they express a necessary and inviolable order (at least, when free will does not intervene); they have nothing to do with respect for the law. As to the laws of logic, they are either the *ideal* laws of intelligence, considered solely by itself, freed from all the accidents of sensibility and passion, and in this case are like the laws of geometry; or else they are precepts by whose aid the will advances toward the ideal goal of intelligence, in which case they are *technical* laws, or reasons for action. Here rises again the question; When we obey logical laws — that is, the rules of method — do we obey them out of respect for the law? Not at all. If we obey the laws of method, it is because they are the necessary means for attaining truth. We accept them as means, not as ends. But, you say, I ought to obey the laws of logic for their own sake, even if I do not attain my end. Granted;[1] but here we pass from

[1] Yet with some qualification, for it is permissible to rise above these rules when it is possible to do so. Most scientific men make their discoveries

the domain of logic to that of morals. It is morality which commands me to follow the laws of logic: from this point of view I ought to do every thing I possibly can to avoid error, whatever may be the result. But, from the stand-point of logic, it is for the sake of these results that I should employ the best means. To practice the method for its own sake merely, would be a fruitless and contradictory operation.[1]

If we pass from psychological and logical laws to those which are exterior, to civil and positive laws, we find here also rules for action: they are not merely logical or physical necessities, but are orders, and, consequently, rules, which may be fulfilled or disobeyed, which lay imperative commands upon the will. The question now rises, whether this kind of laws should be obeyed for their own sake, or for any other reason. Plainly, so far as the civil law and those who represent it are concerned, it is a matter of utter indifference whether it is obeyed for one reason or for another, so long as it is obeyed. It matters little whether it is through fear of punishment, fear of disgrace, love of safety, or love of our fellow-creatures. The civil law cannot see into the conscience. If all the citizens obey the law, and peace reigns among them, it asks no more.

However, ought we not to obey even civil laws out of respect for them? Would he not be a bad citizen who should see in the law only a material means of escaping evil? Yes, undoubtedly; but here, as with the laws of logic, we take the moral point of view. It is morality which commands us to obey civil laws independently of their results, because they are laws: it is morality which commands the citizen to be something more than the obedient slave of the law —to be its free and enlightened representative. Thus it is moral law which lends to civil law its majestic authority.

by inspiration, much more than by rule. Here a strict formalism would be simply ridiculous. The same is true of the laws of medicine. One would prefer to be cured contrary to rules, rather than to die in accordance with them. Finally, this is true also of the laws of poetry or rhetoric.

[1] Of course, I except the case in which what I am seeking for is the discovery of a method.

We have still to distinguish the moral law from the other internal rules of action, which may all be classed under the law of interest, properly defined. Now, if we make this comparison, we shall see clearly, as Kant has plainly demonstrated, that these — for example, the laws of prudence, of skill, of interest properly understood — are never obeyed for their own sake, but always for the sake of some aim which they endeavor to attain, while moral law commands for its own sake without reference to any foreign end. Hence comes the celebrated distinction established by Kant between *hypothetical* or conditional imperatives — that is to say, rules which prescribe an action merely with relation to an end — and *categorical* imperatives, which command absolutely, without regard to any end.

Here we suddenly encounter a serious difficulty. In the first part of this treatise we contested what has been called the formalism of Kant; that is to say, that fundamental proposition of his philosophy, "that the principle of morality commands by its form, and not by its substance." But does this principle differ in any way from the very formula of the categorical imperative? For example, if we say; "Do right, whatever may be the result," do we not set aside all consideration of aims, and take the law itself for an end? If we say that law should be obeyed from respect for the law, is not this in reality obeying the form of the law, and not its substance? Suppose that the motive of your action is drawn from the very thing which you will realize by this action, is it not true that the law will then be only a means by which to attain this end, whatever it may be, whether personal or impersonal, rational or empirical? Take, if you will, the conception of perfection. If this conception is the real motive for your action, the formula will no longer be, *Do right*, in an absolute and categorical manner, but, Do right *if you wish to be perfect.* The imperative is then no longer categorical, but becomes *hypothetical;* and I can emancipate myself from the precept by freeing myself from the condition. The

law is no longer an end, it is only a means; and the essential character of duty seems to vanish as we approach. If instead of perfection we take the conception of happiness, even in the most exalted meaning of the word — for example, celestial happiness — then it is still more evident that duty will be only a means, just as interest is; or, rather, it will become identified with interest.

These considerations, however forcible they may appear to be, do not, in my opinion, counterbalance those which we have already expressed as to the impossibility of absolute formalism in morality. Recall, first, what has already been noted, that Kant himself, whatever he may say, does not hold fast to this absolute formalism; for, after having considered the imperative in its form, he considers it also in its substance: he admits subjective (empirical) ends and objective ends. He admits that the categorical imperative assumes "that there is something whose existence has in itself an absolute value, and which is an end in itself: in this will be found the basis of the categorical imperative." He discovers that humanity, and every reasonable being in general, is an end in itself. And he draws thence this second formula; "Act in such a way as always to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, as an end, and never make use of it as a means." Now, whatever term of dialectics may be used, it is impossible to regard as identical these two formulas of Kant — one affirming the universality of law, the other affirming humanity to be an end in itself. The first is purely *formal*, and the second is *material*. Undoubtedly, Kant started with the idea that there is no *absolute* good but the good will — that is to say, a will to act out of respect for the law; and he concluded from this that such a will, having an absolute value, is an end in itself. But the good will which obeys the law is not the same thing as that ideal good will which is identified with the law itself, and which is the essence of the reasonable being, and therefore an end in itself. This second good will is an object, an

ideal, which it is the duty of the former to make real. The good will has, then, an end which is not itself, which is — if you choose to say so — its true essence, but yet its ideal essence, which should not be confounded with it.

But let us leave aside this argument *ad hominem:* we say that the doctrine of duty does not require, as Kant supposed, a law without substance and without end. In reality, if we look closely, we shall see that every *categorical imperative* is actually a *hypothetical imperative*, just as much as are the rules of interest and of prudence. "Thou shalt not lie," the moral law says to me. This, it is said, is a command without condition. Not at all. There is something understood: "Thou shalt not lie, if thou desirest to act as becomes a human creature." "Thou shalt not get drunk, if thou dost not desire to be a brute." Finally, the condition which is always understood in each categorical imperative is the excellence of human personality, considered as an end in itself. Imagine, for example, a person who is indifferent to this end, who does not care for human dignity, who has no repugnance to the life of brutes: the categorical imperative would have no power over him, and there would be no way in which to make him comprehend the necessity for practising the right.

This is what Fénelon seems to have desired to show in the profound and witty dialogue between Ulysses and Gryllus. The latter, whom Circe had transformed into a hog, could not make up his mind to resume his former shape. Ulysses speaks thus to him: "If you had any feeling at all, you would be only too happy to become a man again." *Gryllus:* "I don't care for that. The life of a hog is much pleasanter." *Ulysses:* "Are you not shocked yourself at such baseness? You live only on filth." *Gryllus:* "What does it matter? Every thing depends on one's taste." *Ulysses:* "Is it possible that you have so soon forgotten every noble and advantageous gift of humanity?" *Gryllus:* "Do not talk to me of humanity: its nobility is only imaginary." *Ulysses:*

"But you, then, count as nothing eloquence, poetry, music, science, etc.?" *Gryllus:* "My temperament, as a hog, is so happy, that it raises me above all those fine things. I like better to grunt than to be eloquent in your way." *Ulysses:* "I am overcome with surprise at your stupidity." *Gryllus:* "A great marvel that a hog should be stupid! Let each keep to his own nature." Such a dialogue might easily be indefinitely prolonged. No moral law would be possible for one who cared nothing for human dignity, and who was willing to sacrifice it. Such a one could be punished and crushed, but not persuaded.

The difference between the two classes of imperatives recognized by Kant, does not, then, arise, as has been supposed, from there being, on the one hand, a condition, and, on the other hand, none at all. No: every imperative must have a reason, and consequently a condition. Only in one of these two cases the condition is such that one may at any time cast it off; while, in the other, one can never do this. "Do thus, if you wish to be rich." But I may wish not to be rich; and, in relinquishing the end, I shall also relinquish the means. On the contrary, "Do thus, if you wish to be a man." I cannot but wish to be a man. Undoubtedly my lower desires, my passion, my caprice, may emancipate themselves from this condition; but my higher desires, my true will, what is called my conscience, cannot do so. Now, a command depending on a condition from which one cannot free one's self, is plainly equivalent to a command without any condition. Kant was, then, perfectly correct in distinguishing the two classes of imperatives; and it is quite true that one of these is categorical. One class is, then, relative, and the other absolute.

In my theory this distinction exists, but I explain it differently. There are two classes of objects — one, that of exterior or corporal goods, which have a value only in proportion to the pleasure which they procure for us, or the desires which they excite; the other, comprising the goods of the

soul, which have a value in themselves, and possess an intrinsic excellence independent of our desires. The ancients were familiar with this distinction. Aristotle, in particular, always distinguishes between that which should be sought for the sake of something else (ἕνεκα ἑτέρου τινος), and that which should be sought for its own sake (αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα). The former are only the *means* for the satisfaction of our desires: the latter are *ends in themselves.*

Now, these two classes of objects may be called goods: the one class will be relative goods, the other will be absolute goods. As to the former, it is for me to decide whether I will seek them, or not; for, on the one hand, they are relative to my sensibility, which is entirely individual, and, on the other, I may always deprive myself of a certain pleasure if I see fit to do so. From this point of view, no maxim of interest has the character of a command; for, if you love a thing, it does not follow that I will love it. Besides, I am always free to renounce any thing that I love, were it only to prove to myself that I can do as I like.

It is not the same with those objects which I regard as excellent in themselves, independently of my pleasure. Truth, modesty, dignity, beneficence, liberty, are goods which it is not in my power to sacrifice to my individual pleasure. They are such that I cannot help wishing for them, even when they would be painful to my passions. These, then, are desirable for their own sake, *propter sese expetenda.*

Kant's definition, "Duty is the necessity of obedience to the law from respect for the law," is, then, absolutely correct. Only, when we speak of the moral law, we do not mean an abstract command founded on no reason, like a military order, but a command accompanied by its motive, its reason, its condition, either expressed or understood. "Be sincere, if you desire to respect the intelligence within you, which is made for truth." "Be sober, if you wish to be a man, and not a brute." Duty requires us to obey this entire law, comprising the condition, and needs no other motive than that

which is expressed in the law. If, on the contrary, we perform the same actions through fear or through hope, we no longer perform them out of respect for the law, and they at once lose the character of morality.

From all these considerations, we must conclude that the popular saying; "Do your duty, whatever may be the result," signifies merely; "Do your duty without considering the agreeable or disagreeable consequences that may result." Were it to be understood differently, and in too literal a sense, one might do one's duty without considering properly whether it really were one's duty. The will, or the moral intention, being the sole element of morality, and all internal or external aims being set aside, it would not matter whether one performed one action or another, and all moral standards would disappear. Thus formalism in morals would lead to fanaticism or to quietism. The maxim, *fiat justitia, pereat mundus*, is, in itself, the refutation of moral formalism by absurdity.

The essential characteristics of duty arise from its nature. We may, with Kant, include them under two heads. Duty is *absolute;* that is to say, its commands are without restrictions, and it admits of no exception drawn from the interests of the agent. It is *universal;* that is to say, it gives the same commands to all men under the same circumstances.

The first of these characteristics is deduced directly from the very idea of duty; for there would be no such thing as duty were there not something superior to the individual, serving as his model or aim. Now, this model should not accommodate itself to the inclinations of the individual, but the individual should mould himself into the likeness of the model. The term "model" implies something fixed, which does not change according to the state of the one who imitates it: hence the law which commands us to imitate it partakes of the fixity and immobility of the model itself; consequently it is absolute. If it were to be modified according to the subjective inclinations of the agent — that

is to say, according to his passions and caprices — it would no longer express the exact relation of an agent to an ideal type superior to himself: it would no longer be any thing but a means of making the ideal subordinate to the different aims of the individual. In this sense, it is correct to say, with Kant, that the essence of the moral law lies in its *form*, and not in its *substance*, if by substance we mean what Kant himself calls *subjective* aims; that is to say, interested motives.

From this first characteristic the second follows logically. The moral law, disregarding the subjective aims of the individual or his sensibility, addresses itself consequently only to his will and to his reason — in other words, to that which is essentially identical in all men: it must, therefore, be the same for all. Moreover, it derives its fundamental character from the nature of the model which it commands us to imitate. Now, this model is the essence of humanity in its fulness, in its perfection; each man owing it to himself that he should be a man. But the essence of humanity is identical in all men: therefore the law should be the same for all.

Now, these two characteristics, universality and absoluteness, seem to be in contradiction with the testimony of experience, and with the demands which reason makes of humanity; for, on the one hand, experience testifies that the moral law is not the same with all men, and, on the other, reason requires that the moral law should follow the essential law of humanity, which is development and progress. Hence arise two questions: How can a universal law vary in different times and places, as experience testifies that it has done? How can an absolute law be transformed and purified, as reason demands?

This double difficulty is met by a very simple distinction.

We must distinguish between the universality of duty considered in itself, and the universality of the interpretations of duty given by the consciences of different men, of different

peoples, of different centuries; that is to say, between the *objective* and the *subjective* universality of the idea of duty. In this second sense, it may readily be granted that the idea of duty is not the same among all men, in all ages, in all places. We might even go so far as to say that this idea is wanting in certain consciences. Children, for example, do not acquire it for some time; and it may be that nations in their childhood are totally destitute of it. For a long time instinct takes the place of the idea of duty, and the discernment of good and evil may be itself but an instinct. But it is none the less true, that duty is objectively universal, and that, wherever this idea is present in the conscience, it presents itself as universal; that is to say, as being binding on every conscience which is placed under the same conditions. It belongs to *subjective moral science* to trace, and to explain, the variations which the idea of duty may undergo within the human conscience. But *formal moral science*, which treats of duty considered in itself, must recognize its universal and absolute character.

It is not in reality a paradox, that while the law, as well as the type from which it results, remains absolute in itself, we can yet take knowledge of it only relatively and progressively, in proportion as we reflect, and as we learn to comprehend better the essence of human nature. Thus, for example, that which all men have in common, and which makes them members of one family, citizens of one city, was for a long time masked by feuds of races, of tribes, of language, of religion, etc. Hence a long time was required to bring the idea of universal brotherhood into the moral law. So, too, human dignity, which requires that no man should obey any thing but law, was for a long time obscured by the established habits of the servile obedience of the weak to the strong. Thus morality is modified and perfected, in proportion as we make new discoveries in the study of human nature. It does not follow, that the moral law is in itself susceptible of change and of progress.

It would, indeed, be impossible to explain moral progress, were there not an absolute ideal type toward which we may advance indefinitely but which we can never attain.

Perhaps such a type can never be perfectly understood by humanity; but it is not necessary that we should fully comprehend its essence, it is enough that we should have an *idea* of it. Now, this idea, so far as it exercises authority over us, will not permit us to alter it in the least: it is, therefore, absolute. It lays upon us its commands without any conditions, without any exceptions, without any attempt to accommodate itself to us. It is not strict for one, accommodating for another: it is not lenient to-day, imperative to-morrow. Undoubtedly the *responsibility* of each individual is determined by the extent of his knowledge of the law; but the law is such, only in so far as it issues commands without favor and without distinction.

Neither, when we speak of the universality of the law, should we be understood to mean a sort of abstract universality, in which no allowance would be made for any special condition, or any difference in circumstances; for this would soon lead to absurdity and impossibility. For example, if you say; "One ought to do good to men," without making any addition to this statement, and if, of this abstract rule, you make an absolute principle without qualification, or special limitation, then it follows that you should do good to any member of mankind, not considering whether the person is sick or well, rich or poor, honest or vicious; whether it may be a child, a woman, a man in his maturity or in old age, whether he has rendered you a service or is an entire stranger to you, whether he is a fellow-citizen or a foreigner, etc. Now, for each of these circumstances, there is a special duty which exactly corresponds to each; and, in proportion as you multiply the circumstances, you will see that the duty is modified, or, at least, that it becomes defined in some special way. It is not, then, correct to say that duty is absolutely and literally independent of circumstances. This would be equivalent to

saying that one has the same duties toward a benefactor whether he is happy or unhappy, which is not true; for, in the latter case, you would owe him effectual aid, while, in the former, you would owe him only your affection. It would also be equivalent to saying that one's duty toward foreign countries is the same whether they are at peace or at war with our own, which is not true; for in time of peace there is nothing wrong in taking service in a foreign army, except it should declare war with our own land; but in time of war this exception would be impossible. Aristotle expresses this truth when he says that the moral law is not a cast-iron rule, but a Lesbian law; that is to say, a flexible rule, its application differing in different cases. "We do not require the same courage from a child as from a man," he says, "nor the same towards a lion as towards a wolf." Undoubtedly, these principles are susceptible of vicious interpretations; but the abuse which may be made of them does not alter the fact that their correctness is fully proved, nor that to deny them would be to overturn all morality. Thus a complication of circumstances modifies one's duty materially, and sometimes even occasions great trouble in the soul. This is why it has been said, for example, that the most difficult thing in a time of civil commotion is, not to do one's duty, but to find out what that duty is.

The immutability and universality of the law of duty should, then, be understood in a special sense, which is, that duty does not vary with our passions and our interests. But it does vary with the different conditions under which men may be placed; or, rather, it does not alter, but it is determined in a special way according to the case which is under consideration. Just as no two leaves in all nature are exactly alike, so no two actions are precisely similar; and consequently duty is never strictly the same in two different actions. Thus, since the rules of morality cannot be fully determined beforehand, there is, in many cases, a legitimate part for inspiration to fulfil. But however much specialized

duty may be in any given circumstances, it is nevertheless universal, in the sense that I should demand of any other man placed in the same conditions, that he should receive it as a maxim and a law.

§ III. *The Foundation of Moral Obligation.*

We have already considered: First, The existence of duty; Second, Its nature and character. It now remains for us to examine its foundation.

It is generally said, and I have also stated, that it is an essential characteristic of good that it is obligatory, and that we cannot form the conception of a good action without immediately feeling that it is our duty to perform it. Good implies obligation, and it is just as necessary that good should be obligatory, as that a straight line should be the shortest distance from one point to another.[1] But in many minds this connection is not direct, and may be overlooked. If my intelligence conceives of a thing as good, it does not necessarily follow that I am commanded and obliged to accomplish it. This will be clearly seen if we consider the different ideas of good which philosophers have entertained.

If it is said, for example, that good is conformity to the universal order, I grant that the universal order is good, and that it would be very good to have this order maintained. But why am I called upon to promote this? This order may maintain itself — I am perfectly willing; but why and how am I required to effect it? I did not establish it: I am not responsible for it. I will conform to it so far as it agrees with my own interests; but if it opposes me, if it oppresses me, for what reason should I sacrifice myself to it?

If good is made to consist, as Clarke and Wollaston say it does, in certain eternal and necessary relations, resulting

[1] Here we have nothing to do with the question whether the domain of good is more extended than that of duty, which we will discuss in the following chapter, but whether good in general is obligatory, and why it is so.

from the nature of things in the same way as the truths of geometry, can any one tell me why I should be under obligation to realize some, and not others? When I draw a triangle, is it my duty to make it so that its three angles shall be equal to two right angles, or to make a square upon the base of a rectangle which shall be equal to the sum of two other squares erected upon its sides? Not at all. Why, then, do certain relations exercise a constraint over my will, while others do not? And what duty do I owe to the nature of things?

It is the same in regard to the principle of interest. Why should I, because I am a part of society, be required to sacrifice my own good to that of the community? Let the community take care of itself! It is not my business to protect it.

From these illustrations, we see that we are capable of comprehending the idea of good, and yet of separating it from any idea of obligation. We do this daily, in very exalted, very noble, and very difficult, actions. Obligation does not, then, appear at first sight to be the immediate consequence of good. The judgment which connects obligation and good is, then, synthetic, not analytic: obligation is added to good, not deduced from it.

Some philosophers have thought it possible to call in the principle of the divine will in order to settle this difficulty.

This principle of the divine will may be understood in two ways. Either it is the divine will which creates the distinction between good and evil, between justice and injustice, which is the theory of Hobbes and Crusius, or else the divine will is not the cause of the good itself, but only of the obligation. Good is not good, it is said, because it is what God wishes; it is good by its very essence; but good becomes obligatory by the command and the will of God. This is the theory of Puffendorf.[1]

[1] M. Émile Beaussire, in a work on the *Fondement de l'Obligation Morale* (Paris, 1853), has advocated the opinion of Puffendorf with ability and force.

It is easy to apprehend the difference between these two theories. According to the first, the distinction between good and evil is arbitrary, and depends solely on the free will of an all-powerful being, who might have made good evil, and evil good. This has been expressly declared by some theologians, even by the wise and pious Gerson: —

"God [he says] does not require certain actions because they are good, but they are good because he requires them: just as others are evil because he forbids them." [1]

The second theory, on the contrary, does not maintain that good is arbitrary, and dependent entirely on the divine will. But it declares that without a command from God, the absolute idea of good would not suffice to lay any obligation upon us.

"Good alone [it is said] is obligatory; but there are actions, some of which are among the best, which we are not obliged to perform, and which could never be made universal commands. . . . Good includes both duty and devotion — the probity of an honest man, and the sublime virtues of heroes and saints. As compared with obligation, good is an illimitable field, within which obligation must remain, and mark out the duties of men, but it cannot cover the entire ground. Duty may, then, be based upon a decree of the divine will, without becoming associated with those sensuous or mystical theories, according to which morality includes no absolute idea, no necessary truth. Good is as immutable for God as it is for men; but God fixes within the circle of good that which cannot be neglected without sin, since it implies obligation." [2]

It is impossible not to see the difference between these two theories, and it must be admitted that the objections which are made to the former do not necessarily affect the latter. The former has already received a sufficient reply. It has been shown that it destroys the very essence of the moral law, that it attributes to God an arbitrary and tyrannical character, establishing under another name the old doc-

[1] *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, art. Gerson.

[2] Émile Beaussire, *Du Fondement de l'Obligation Morale*, p. 17.

trine of *fatum;* but is this true also of the second theory—that of Puffendorf and of Barbeyrac, in which the divine will appears, not as the principle of good, but as the principle of obligation?

It seems to me that these two theories, whatever may be their apparent difference, lead to the same results; and the second does so in a way which is, perhaps, even more offensive than the other. In fact, it seems to follow from this theory, that God has willed, not that a certain action shall be good, but that a certain good action shall be obligatory: whence it follows conversely, that, if he had not willed that it should be obligatory, it would not be so. God might, then, have made a human creature endowed with reason, knowing perfectly well that a lie is evil, and that truth is good, yet being under no obligation to tell the truth, and permitted by Him to lie. God might have created a benefactor and a person under obligation to him, leaving the latter exempt from the duty of gratitude; or a son not required to respect his father, a mother free not to love her child, friends at liberty to slander each other, etc. If it is said that such things are impossible because of the divine wisdom, that is equivalent to saying that what is good in itself is inseparable from obligation, that the bond between them was not established by a divine decree. If, however, these consequences are accepted, then we have admitted every thing that makes the first theory odious, by making God practically the creator of good and evil, thus ranking holiness as inferior to power. This result seems even more offensive in the second theory than in the first, for we can understand that God may create good and evil; but, if this distinction exists eternally and essentially, it seems utterly inadmissible to say that God can excuse us from doing good, and authorize us to do evil.

Moreover, as Dugald Stewart has remarked, this theory turns in a vicious circle, for it implies that it is obligatory to obey a higher authority; that is, that the obligation is logi-

cally anterior to the act of enacting the law. Hence this act cannot be the basis of the obligation. Suppose, for example, that no moral law existed which said to me, "You ought to obey the will of a superior:" then such a will might *constrain* me by its power, but I do not see how it could *oblige* me to obey. Now, there is no philosopher who does not understand the distinction between constraint and obligation.

To this objection it is replied that it is itself a vicious circle.

"To inquire the reason for a principle is to begin by contesting its right to the name of principle: it is begging the question. On whatever foundation we base obligation, we are exposed to the same objection. Whether we consider good, justice, the universal order, or human nature, if one asks how these ideas can impose any duty on man, we are forced to reply, that he is under moral obligation to bring himself into conformity with good, with justice, and the universal order: in a word, we are compelled to go back to a primitive obligation, beyond which we cannot pass to search for any principle without moving in a circle."[1]

This is all very true, provided that the principle gives a satisfactory reply to the question asked, and admits of no doubt. If, however, it leaves the question unanswered, then it is not the right principle. If the divine will were really the principle of obligation, I should no longer need to ask why the divine will is obligatory. Since we are forced to pause before some final "because," I prefer to say, that obligation is directly and inevitably united with the idea of good; although I am unable to give any better reason for this than I can for the connection between cause and effect. If you refuse to admit this direct connection, then you must give me some reason which will make me understand more clearly than before the basis of the obligation. This has not been done; for I cannot see at all plainly why I ought to submit to a will that is more powerful than mine, even if it is infinitely so, if this will commands me without any reason, and if it has no just title to authority over me. It is this

[1] *Beaussire*, p. 149.

title which forms the principle of obligation, and not the mere will, which is only a force. Now, whatever may be said, force is only a principle of constraint, never of obligation.

But, it is said, has not the Almighty, who gives us life and being, a right to subject us to any trial which he sees fit to choose, before bestowing upon us the happiness to which he calls us after this life? Then good and evil would be only the sum of the actions required of, or forbidden to, men as a means of gaining eternal rewards, and avoiding future torments! Such a system is merely a special form fo the utilitarian theory. It would also be conceiving moral order as formed upon the model of legal and material order. If, on the other hand, the ideas of recompense and punishment are eliminated, and the divine decree is supposed to be based in some way upon the essence of things, the principle itself is repudiated.

The most plausible reason given in favor of the previous theory, is the distinction which it makes between good and duty, which was explained above. Good, it is said, is a larger, more extended field than duty. Not every thing that is good is obligatory. It is good to sacrifice one's whole fortune in relieving suffering; but it is not a duty, and one is not a bad man if one does not do it. This objection will be subjected to a special examination in the following chapter. We may, therefore, pass it by for the present, and proceed from the criticism to the theory.

According to my view, moral obligation is based upon the following principle: —

"Every being owes it to himself that he should attain to the highest degree of excellence and of perfection of which his nature is capable."

Assuming that there is in every being an element of excellence or of perfection which is exactly proportionate to his place in the scale of being, or, rather, which determines this place in the scale of being;

Assuming that there are beings of different degrees of per-

fection, and whose essence has more or less of excellence and dignity (for example, minerals, vegetables, animals, men);

Assuming that the essence of each being consists in that which is proper to himself, not in that which he holds in common with beings inferior to himself;

Assuming that man has an excellence which is proper to himself, and which consists in those faculties which he does not share with the brutes, or which he possesses in common with them, but in an eminently higher degree;

Assuming that the good of man consists in this very essence which is proper to himself, and by which he raises himself above the brutes;

Assuming that this essence is susceptible of progress and of development, and that man may unceasingly add new knowledge to his mind, new feelings to his heart, greater force to his activity, etc.;

Assuming that the essence of man, and his excellence, consists, not merely in his *rôle* of a distinct individual, but that this excellence is increased and enlarged in proportion as the man is united to humanity by the bonds of sympathy, love, and respect;

Assuming that this ideal essence of humanity is in a certain sense the symbol and the image of the absolute and perfect Being, that is to say, of God;

Assuming that each man finds in the depths of his nature, mingled with all the miseries rising from the sensitive life, this ideal essence of humanity, which is the true man, —

Assuming all these premises, I conclude, that, in my opinion, the man cannot thus conceive his own ideal essence without *wishing* at the same time to realize this essence so far as it is possible. Moral necessity is, as Kant perceived, only the *superior will* of the man laying commands upon his *inferior will*. Man cannot wish to be any thing but a true man, a complete man; that is, to be actually what he is virtually. This will of the reason finds itself in conflict with

the sensitive will. *The superior will, so far as it imposes its authority upon the inferior will, is called obligation.*

Kant has observed justly that a will if *pure*, and perfectly good, would be subject to laws, and to the law of good, just like any other, but it could not be regarded as being *constrained* by these laws to do what is good, because, by its very nature, it would of itself conform to them. Thus for the divine will, and in general for any holy will, there are no *imperatives* nor *orders:* duty is a word which is no longer appropriate, since the *will* is already, and of necessity, in conformity with the law. Duty, on the contrary, always presents itself with a certain character of *constraint.* It is a law opposed to the inclinations, and consequently assumes a certain rebellion of the nature. Only, this constraint is distinguished from the constraint of force, by the fact that the latter is violent, the former an act of reason: one is a physical, the other an ideal, necessity.

The opposition within man between the pure will, which desires the right, and the sensitive and passionate will, which desires pleasure, is so striking a fact in human nature, that it has been commented upon by all moralists. It is this conflict which the Christian moralists call the war between the flesh and the spirit. "The law in my members wars against the law of my mind," said St. Paul. This law of the mind is the law laid down by the pure will, that which infallibly desires the good, in opposition to the rebellious and fractious will which desires only pleasure.

This is the meaning of Kant's admirable theory of the *autonomy of the will*, which can signify only the sure consent of an enlightened will to its own good, not the blind caprice of an arbitrary will. We should not transfer from God to man that idea of a blind fatality, which derives the principle of duty from an arbitrary, unreasoning will. In God this would be tyranny: in man it would be anarchy. No, it is not arbitrarily, guided by his caprices, that man establishes a law for himself. Caprice desires no law. But man, in so

far as he comprehends his true essence, cannot desire any thing differing from this essence: it is this irresistible and natural desire for the greatest good which takes the form of a law when it finds itself brought into conflict with a lower will. In this sense the will gives a law to itself, makes itself a law; and, in the *reign of ends*, man is thus at once legislator and subject.

Those who base moral obligation upon the divine will, intended, perhaps, to say precisely what I have just said; that is, that it is the pure, ideal, and consequently divine, will which enacts this law for us. Their error lies in representing this will as something exterior. Nothing which is exterior can be the basis of morality. It is not because a higher power *desires* our good that it is incumbent upon us to seek it: it is because we inevitably desire it ourselves. The obligation, then, comes from within, not from without.

Fichte argued admirably in defence of this principle that obligation is interior:

"There is [he says] absolutely no exterior foundation, no exterior criterion, for the obligatoriness of a moral law. No law, no commandment (though claiming to be a divine commandment), is unconditionally obligatory: it is obligatory only on condition that it is confirmed by our own conscience, and only because our conscience does confirm it. It is our absolute duty not to receive this commandment without a personal examination, and to control it by our own conscience: to neglect such an examination is absolutely contrary to our conscience. Whatever does not come from the belief of our own conscience is actual sin."

There are two schools which always agree in denying that there exists in man what I have called the *interior principle*, what the Stoics called τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν, the guiding principle, and who explain every thing by exterior causation: these schools are, the school of the senses, and the school of authority. Ideas come from the senses, according to the one; from tradition, according to the other. For the former, the moral law is an invention of legislators; for the latter, it is the command of an all-powerful will. Conscience is a habit:

conscience is submission. Conform to social laws, says the one. Obey wise men, says the other. One of the greatest of the latter wrote thus: "Make yourself a brute, what have you to lose?"

Yes, undoubtedly my conscience tells me that I should learn from those who are wiser; but it is *my own* conscience which tells me this, and it is this which I obey when I consult those who are the most enlightened. My reason orders me to obey the divine will manifesting itself to me by the law of duty; but it is *my* reason which commands me, and it is because this law is in conformity with my reason that I obey it. Morality is an essentially personal act; and this making one's self a brute, of which Pascal speaks, is the absolute reverse of morality. It is a material and mechanical rule substituted for the true rule — that of our own reason and our own will. In the moral, as in the political, world, man is neither a slave, nor even a subject: he is a *citizen*.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD AND DUTY.

WE have seen, in the preceding chapter, that one of the corner-stones on which the attempt has been made to base the doctrine of the divine will is the distinction of two domains in the moral world — one in which the principle of obligation rules, and the other rising above obligation — the domain of duty and that of good. It is a generally received opinion that the field of good is larger than that of duty. Every thing which is a duty is good, they say; but the converse is not true — good is not always a duty. These two ideas do not exactly correspond: the idea of good includes more than the idea of duty. Above and beyond duty, there is a certain degree of perfection which confers on him who attains it a special merit, and for which he deserves especial praise and reward.

"Good and duty [says the moralist] may be represented under the figure of two concentric circles, which, having the same centre, differ as to their circumferences. Duty is the limit below which we may not descend without losing in the moral world our standing as men. Good is the highest aim which the united efforts of all our faculties can set before themselves: it is the supreme, the eternal order to which we are required to conform in proportion to our intelligence and our strength. It is perfection itself, which we are able always to approach more and more closely, without ever attaining it."[1]

This theory seems at first to be founded upon common sense. It is generally admitted that certain actions, certain moral qualities, are beautiful and honorable: we praise those

[1] Ad. Franck, *Morale pour tous*, c. iii., p. 23.

who possess or perform them, but we do not blame those who abstain from them, which would not be the case if they were strictly obligatory. For example, we should praise a rich man if he employed his fortune in the development of the arts and sciences. This is evidently good and praiseworthy, yet we could not say that it is the duty of every rich man to make such a use of his fortune. We should praise and admire a man of moderate means who should undertake to help and bring up a family not his own, yet one who did not do so would not be culpable. Yet how could he fail to be so if such an action were strictly obligatory?

It even seems as if, in common opinion, the idea of *merit* transcends that of duty, instead of corresponding exactly with it; for nothing is more common than to hear a man who has performed some act of strict probity say; "There is no merit in that: I have only done my duty." From which it would follow that an action would be meritorious only if it surpassed duty, if the agent should, so to speak, put in something of his own.

The same thing is seen in religious morality, where a distinction is generally made between a precept and a counsel; the former commanding us to do what is absolutely necessary for salvation, the latter telling us what we can do if we wish to attain perfection. Thus St. Paul tells us, "To marry is well, but not to marry is better." Whence it follows that celibacy is a more perfect state than marriage, but it is not obligatory, although perfect. It is even clear that this state could be chosen by some, only on condition that it should not be chosen by all, otherwise humanity would die out. So, too, those words which Jesus Christ spoke to the rich young man, as related in the gospel; "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor," have been understood by the Fathers of the Church as counsel, and not as precept. For, if every one were to give away all his goods, everybody would become poor, and would need to have restored what had just been given away. The community of property

among the early Christians has also been explained as being free, not obligatory. Finally, the poverty of certain religious orders, which has been considered by some persons as a virtue, has never been regarded as an obligation binding on all.

If, then, we consider morality, either sacred or secular, it seems that each assumes the existence of a state which, surpassing the strength of average humanity, is left to the free choice of the individual, and thus gives him a title to special excellence. With the one, this is *holiness;* with the other, *heroism.* It seems to be generally conceded, that no one is under obligation to be either a saint or a hero (no matter which of these two states may be regarded as the ideal). There is, then, a large field outside of that which is strictly necessary; and it is here that the idea of good goes beyond that of duty.

A final consideration offered in favor of this distinction is, that to reduce morality to pure duty, without admitting the existence of a higher and free field, is to reduce morality to a mere rule and order, to make man an agent always subject to a law, to replace morality by legality, and to take from the free will all its initiative and individuality. It is, in fine, as it has been said, to apply to morality a sort of military *régime*, like that which Frederick the Great established in his dominions.[1]

All these reasons are specious, yet not convincing.

If it is merely meant that a thing which is good in itself is not absolutely obligatory on every one, this is unquestionably true. For example, it is plainly not the duty of every one to go in search of the passage around the north pole, although it would be a good and fine thing to find it. Such reasoners leave out of sight the fact that here a comparison

[1] M. Émile Grucker, in his *Étude sur Hemsterhuys* (Paris, 1866, p. 135), makes this comparison between the philosophy of Wolf and the Prussian military discipline. It may be equally well applied to that of Kant. The same author adds several very felicitous pages on the part in morality which belongs to individuality.

is made between what is good in a general way, and what is obligatory upon certain persons in particular; and these ideas are not really equivalent, since we are considering, on the one hand, a good which is indefinite, and, on the other, a definite duty, which is an error in logic. We should properly compare what is good for certain persons, and what is obligatory for the same persons: it is in such a case, it seems to me, that the two ideas are inseparable. For example, why is not such a voyage obligatory for me? Because for me it would not be a reasonable, and consequently not a good, act. Suppose, for example, that some one, ignorant of navigation, and not having undergone previous preparatory hardships, having no geographical knowledge, should, in mere puerile excitement, leave a position in which he is useful, in order to go on an expedition from which he could derive no benefit. Clearly, such an action would not be good for him; and, for that reason, it would not be obligatory. But, on the other hand, imagine a sailor, who fulfils all the desirable conditions for undertaking such a voyage, so that there is every reason to expect that he will succeed; suppose, moreover, that at the time there is no better action for him to perform; then I say, that this action becomes obligatory for him, or, at least, that it has precisely the same degree of obligation as it has of moral goodness, and that, if it is allowable for him to neglect it, it will be so because he can accomplish another action as good or better; for example, he may perhaps serve his country in a just war, perform more directly practical services in a profitable commercial expedition, etc.[1] Similarly, why is not a certain woman under obligation to become a Sister of Charity? It may be, perhaps, because, being married and having children, it would be absurd and unjust to leave her

[1] These lines, written some years before the war of 1870, proved singularly prophetic in regard to M. Gustave Lambert, who, after bravely striving for several years to get his expedition ready, at the very moment when the funds had just been voted by the legislative body, was obliged to postpone the accomplishment of his enterprise, that he might serve his country in another way, and was killed at Buzenval during the siege of Paris.

family; that is, the action would not be obligatory because it would not be good. If, however, we imagine a situation in which the act of becoming a Sister of Charity would be the very best possible, I say that this act would then become strictly obligatory; and, if it never is so, it is because it has never been proved that it is the very best possible act, and because it is allowable for one to choose between several actions which are, or appear to be, equally good.

The distinction between the two domains, that of good and that of duty, would lead to the inadmissible supposition, that between two actions, one of which is plainly better than the other, the individual is at liberty to choose that which is the lesser good. How could one have such liberty? Is not this another form of that doctrine of the casuists which was so severely condemned by Pascal and by Bossuet, that of two probable opinions one may adopt that which is *least probable?*

Besides, in virtue of what principle can it be pretended, that, within the domain of good, obligation extends only to a certain point, and that beyond this there lies a large and free field, which is the domain of merit, but not of duty? By what test can we distinguish that which is obligatory from that which is meritorious, that which is an absolute command or prohibition from a mere counsel? Such a distinction is comprehensible in a religious morality founded upon sacred books; for one can understand that a human or divine legislator can prescribe certain fixed rules, and then outside of these rules may recommend, without commanding, certain things which are more difficult, for which he reserves special rewards. In this case, the test is the word of the legislator, or of those who are authorized to interpret the text. But where can we find any reason for such a distinction in a natural morality, based upon pure reason? Why should duty stop here? Why should the domain of good begin there?

Shall we say that the domain of duty, properly so called,

includes what are ordinarily termed definite duties, and that good corresponds to indefinite duties (a distinction which I shall consider more fully in the next chapter)? But, in reasoning thus, we should abandon the very principle of distinction between duty and good; for duty, even if indefinite, is still duty. Good would then be accompanied by duty, but by a duty which would be more or less obligatory according to circumstances. Kant, for example, who denies expressly that the domain of good is any larger than that of duty, admits, nevertheless, like every one else, the existence of definite and indefinite duties. These two theories, then, are not equivalent. What is called an indefinite duty is one which cannot be determined beforehand in regard to a particular action, but, nevertheless, is a duty.

A great deal is made of self-devotion, which, it is claimed, is of a higher rank than duty. But, in the first place, is it not clear that in certain cases self-devotion is obligatory, even strictly so? For example, in a battle, is it not the duty of the soldier to sacrifice himself for his country, and the duty of the leaders to sacrifice themselves for their soldiers? In the time of an epidemic, is it not the duty of the physician to sacrifice himself for his patients? In a case of extreme danger, is it not the absolute duty of the father of a family to give up his life for his children? Would any one venture to maintain that the soldier in time of war, the physician in the hospitals, the magistrate in the face of tyranny and violence, do any thing more than their duty in sacrificing themselves?

We must, then, at least make a distinction between a devotion which is obligatory and one which is not; and it would not be easy to find the dividing line between these two kinds of devotion, or the test by which to recognize and distinguish them. In any event, the hypothesis of a principle of devotion which is superior to the principle of duty, breaks down in the most numerous and ordinary cases.

Our opponents exult over special examples which it seems difficult to bring under the ordinary rule.

"It was not the duty of St. Vincent de Paul to open an asylum for deserted orphans. It was not the duty of Lord Byron to fly to the aid of oppressed Greece, and to sacrifice his life for the deliverance of a country not his own."[1]

I answer unhesitatingly, that, if the action performed by St. Vincent de Paul or by Lord Byron was the best one possible for each at the time when he chose and accomplished it, then it was strictly obligatory upon him. In spite of the universality of the idea of duty, we are not all obliged to do the same thing. The magistrate who administers justice is not under obligation to take care of sick people: the soldier who fights for his country is not under obligation to study science and literature. There is, then, a definite field of good for each one of us, appropriate to the place of each in society; and within this field, duty is measured exactly by the goodness of the actions.

Undoubtedly in a special case a certain act may appear to be noble without being obligatory; but it will be because this action, however noble it may be, is not proved to be strictly the best and most just. For example, when Byron, after a disorderly and dissipated life, weary of existence and of himself, under the influence of high-wrought sentiment, allowed himself to be killed for the sake of a country which was nothing to him, and to which his death was of no particular benefit, he performed a heroic action, I admit; but I am by no means convinced that it was a good action, for it was simply a brilliant suicide. If Byron, instead of seeking this empty glory, had made it his business to restore dignity to his life, peace to his domestic hearth, serenity, and consequently fertility, to his genius, he would have performed an infinitely better action, and would have given mankind a more truly useful example. I admit, then, that the action of Byron was not required by duty; but that was because it was not required by good. Every thing that is beautiful is not necessarily good, whatever Plato may say.

[1] Ad. Franck, *Morale pour tous*, c. iii.

Let us take an example of another sort from contemporaneous history. Let it be that of the noble and heroic devotion of the Archbishop of Paris, who died on the barricades in 1848. Can you, they ask us, regard an act like this as the fulfilment of a duty, of a law, of something commanded? Is it not the free action of an inspired soul? Is it not, indeed, the very freedom of the act which constitutes its beauty? Doubtless the soldier in time of war ought to sacrifice his life: this is required by the very idea of his profession. But in the profession of a minister of peace, such as is a priest, there is no implied obligation that one should face death and cruelty. He who exposes himself to them undoubtedly performs a worthy and noble action, but not one that is strictly obligatory.

Who does not see, on the contrary, that the idea of a minister of the gospel implies more fully than that of any other the obligation of self-devotion? Doubtless no one can foresee how or where this self-devotion is to be exercised; and since, thank God! civil wars are very rare, the particular form of self-devotion which the terrible trial through which his country was passing inspired in the Archbishop of Paris, could not have been anticipated *à priori*. Thus no rule can be given for such circumstances; and, as we are in the habit of applying the word duty only to actions which frequently occur, we fancy there is no duty when an exceptional action is in question.

I will add, that as all men have not the same moral consciousness, or at least, as it is not developed in all to the same degree of delicacy and nobility, the same idea would not occur to every man under the same circumstances; and in morality a wide range must be left to the principle of individual judgment. Now, so long as the idea of an action to be performed has not presented itself to our mind, it is clear that it cannot be obligatory for us. When this idea has been distinctly conceived, the case is altered. This action, once made apparent to the mind, presents itself to us with all the

characteristics of duty, and we cannot reject it without remorse. It is true that it would have been possible for the Archbishop of Paris not to conceive the idea of the heroic action which he performed. But suppose that, after having conceived the idea, he had recoiled from its execution: doubtless he would have felt the same remorse which we feel when we fail in those duties which we acknowledge to be obligatory. He would have experienced the feeling of internal humiliation, of moral depreciation; and how could this have happened unless he had been conscious of failing to perform a duty?

Let us, however, endeavor to explain the origin of the idea of two unequal domains in the moral order.

1. This distinction was transferred from religious to secular morality. The ancients knew nothing of it. We have seen that the distinction between a precept and a command originated in positive religious law: its root was the will of the legislator. In philosophic morality the reason for this distinction does not exist.

2. Men have always been inclined to make the best bargain they could with morality. Thus they have considered as strictly obligatory those actions without which social order is impossible, and the security of all is endangered; for example, not to kill, not to steal, etc. As to the others, they are very ready to regard them as a luxury, very fine undoubtedly, but without which one can get along. This is so true, that just in proportion as we pass from one period of civilization to another, from one stage of society to another, we see the domain of the strictly obligatory increasing, while the domain of simple moral evil is proportionately contracted. Thus coarse words, blows, and drunkenness are trifles in certain classes, while they are shameful acts in more enlightened circles.

3. Finally, in this theory, the different applications of duty are confounded with duty itself. For example, it is man's duty to devote himself to his fellow-creatures, but

not to devote himself in one especial way rather than in another. This choice depends upon circumstances: one will devote himself as a soldier, another as a scholar, another as a workman, etc. Thus, if we consider a certain special kind of actions, we may say that these actions are good without being obligatory, because all men cannot perform the same action; and provided that they devote themselves in some special way, and under the circumstances determined by their social status, they have fulfilled their duty. Thus devotion is obligatory in itself, because it is good; and each person is under obligation only to carry out that kind of devotion which is good relatively to himself. From this we see that the ideas of good and of obligation are always correlative and inseparable.

Then, they say to me, you admit, contrary to common sense, that holiness and heroism are obligatory? I do not hesitate to reply; Yes, provided that the meaning of these words is not restricted to certain definite acts. For example, in practice, a saint is generally a friar, and a hero is a soldier. Now, it is evident that it is not the duty of every man to be a monk or a soldier. But if you mean by holiness the highest possible degree of purity, and by heroism the highest possible degree of courage, and if moral perfection consists of both of these, then I say, that each one of us, according to his circumstances, and according to the different conditions in which he is placed, is under obligation to raise himself to the highest possible degree of perfection, and to be a saint or a hero according as the nature of things may require. Now, this limit, fixed by the nature of things, each of us, with complaisant indolence, sets as low as possible, and, even then, for most of the time will fall below it. Duty, on the contrary, consists in placing this limit as high as possible, and making the utmost efforts to attain it. The true principle is this: no one is obliged to do what is impossible, but it is every one's duty to do whatever is possible. It would be absurd to maintain, that, when it is possible for me to

attain a certain degree of perfection, I have a right to be satisfied with a lesser one. Similarly, it would be absurd to require of me a degree of perfection to which my nature does not call me (for example, to discover the system of the universe, like Newton). Only, since the limit of the possible and the impossible is not determined *à priori*, it is my duty, I repeat, to set this limit as high as possible; and this is precisely what I call the good.

There are, then, a good in itself, and a duty in itself, which are mutually equivalent: there are also a definite good and a definite duty varying with circumstances and individuals; here, too, the good and the duty are reciprocally equivalent. There is no inequality between the two ideas, except when we regard them from two different points of view. For example, that which is a good in itself (which would be one for a possible creature) may not be a duty for a given creature; but abstract duty is always equivalent to abstract good, and concrete good is interchangeable with concrete duty.

Kant was, then, right in saying, in one of the most sublime pages of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, —

"We should not, like volunteer soldiers, take pride in placing ourselves above the idea of duty, and pretend to act of our own impulse without need of receiving orders. We are under the rule of reason; and in our maxims we should never forget this subjection, nor limit it in any way. We should not, in our presumption, diminish the authority which belongs to law, by seeking anywhere save in the law itself, and in the respect which we owe to it, the guiding principle of our will, even were this otherwise in conformity with the law. Duty and obligation, then, are the only words which express our relation to the moral law. We are, it is true, legislative members of a moral kingdom which our liberty makes possible; but at the same time we are its subjects, not its rulers.

"We lead minds into moral fanaticism, and increase their presumption, when we represent to them the actions which we wish them to perform as noble, sublime, magnanimous; for we make them think that the principle which should determine their conduct is not duty, but that we expect these actions from them as being purely meritorious."

I agree with Kant, that man cannot rise above duty, that he cannot have a luxury of virtue into which he may put something of his own, and by which he can, in a sense, gain superiority to the moral law. Duty rises above all the good that we can do. It is utterly impossible that our good actions can rise above duty.

Is this the same thing as saying that we should regard duty as being, as Kant represents it, a sort of order, a material and purely military law, prescribed for us, as if we were soldiers? Assuredly, we are not volunteers in the moral conflict; we are governed by a law; but is this law one merely of constraint, and not also of love? Is man forbidden, as Kant would have him, to act from love of the law, and must he merely obey it? Further, is this law formulated beforehand for all possible circumstances? Even within the bounds of duty, however strict, is not something left to the initiative of the individual will? On this point I differ from Kant: not outside of duty, but within it, man finds merit through liberty. Man is not, as Kant would have him, a mere slave to his orders, a soldier obeying inflexible regulations, a geometrician armed with square and compass. Indisputably, no. Outside of the law, man owes nothing, and can do nothing. But within the limits of the law he can, and ought to, introduce something of his own. It is for him to interpret the law, applying it to the thousand unforeseen circumstances which will arise, and for which no formula can provide beforehand. It is for him to discover how the application must be made. This is what properly belongs to the individual initiative, and what I call moral *invention*.

There are inventions in morality as well as in the arts, and morally great men are those who have invented grand and noble ways of interpreting and applying well-known laws. One should sacrifice one's self for one's country. Here is a general and abstract law, which is sufficient *à priori*. It is the business of men to discover its application. For example, no law could say beforehand; You

shall put your hand into a chafing-dish, and let it be burned, so that the enemy may know with what sort of men he has to contend. Mucius devised that particular way of proving his courage and his devotion. No one could foresee or prescribe such an act, any more than he could one of Virgil's beautiful images. "Love your neighbor as yourself," says the law. St. Vincent de Paul devised the idea of opening an asylum for deserted children. The Abbé de l'Epée devised that of instructing deaf-mutes. These are new and unexpected applications of a perfectly well-known principle.

What shall be said of the noble words, the grand sayings, which history records for us? Shall we remove them from the domain of morals to that of æsthetics? Assuredly not; yet what moral law could enjoin upon us this principle, "You shall utter a noble saying when dying"? One should show courage when dying: that is the law. But each one will show courage in a way suitable to himself, and according to his character — one by keeping silent, another by speaking.

For centuries publicists have taught that politics cannot be regulated by the laws of morality, and that sovereigns require a special code of morals. A great soul, a noble will, was all that was needed to overthrow this pretended law, and teach us that an entire political life could be governed by the most inflexible morality.

That during a career of twenty years one should show that political sagacity, military heroism, the management of the most important affairs, a crushing weight of responsibility, were in no way inconsistent with public and private morality; that one should be under temptation to put an end to anarchy by taking possession of power, yet should refuse to do so; that one should use an army only for the maintenance of the laws, never in defiance of them; and, far from attempting to excite its natural discontent, should silence all complaints for the sake of public good — all this

is such an extraordinary fact in history, that we should not have believed it possible, had not Washington lived to prove it by accomplishing it.

In a word, virtue is, in a certain sense, a creative act, and in its most sublime features is a free and individual act, which gives rise to unexpected forms of grandeur and generosity. The inferior form of virtue is the legal form; that is, an obedient activity, which, without any spontaneity, follows faithfully a given rule, whether this is the civil law (which is the lowest degree), or a certain moral law received and transmitted by tradition. But true virtue, like genius, is above the law, or, rather, creates it; and this is just as true of duties which come under the head of justice, as of the duties of charity. On one day, virtue discovers that we should forgive our enemies; on another, that we ought not to tyrannize over men's consciences; on another, that the innocence of childhood should be respected, *debetur puero reverentia;* or, again, that one ought to know how to defend his rights, etc. None of these discoveries is made without danger, and traditional wisdom rebels against these divinations of a higher sphere. Thus virtue, like art, is creative; and one might write a history of its discoveries and its inventions. If we consider even our daily actions, we shall see that virtue creates; for no law, no set of rules, is sufficiently minute to declare how one ought to act in all circumstances. It is virtue which discovers and divines this: it is virtue which combines the severe and the gentle, the joyful and the sad, the heroic and the simple, in such a way as to give a different solution in each particular case. Hence it results, that, in morality, example is worth more than precept. It is the hero or the saint who is the true manual of moral science. So soon as such examples have been given, they become *duties* in the opinion of other men. What was at first the work of the individual initiative, becomes a rule and a law. Hence it is not necessary to imagine the existence of two domains, one of good, the other of duty, in one

of which reigns freedom, and in the other an inflexible law. Everywhere, at every step, there is at once law and liberty — a law, in the sense that whenever there is any good that may be accomplished, it is obligatory upon us to fulfil it; freedom, since it is virtue itself which by its free and creative initiative disentangles moral truth from the confused and stifling chaos of our instincts and our prejudices.

CHAPTER III.

DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE DUTIES.

IN addition to the preceding distinction between duty and good, the schools admit also another, and recognize two kinds of duties, which, since the time of Wolf, have been called *definite* and *indefinite*. The first, they say, are strict and exact, enjoining themselves upon the agent in an absolute manner without leaving any latitude of interpretation — such, for example, as paying a debt, restoring things intrusted to us, not killing any one. The others, on the contrary, although obligatory like the former, necessarily leave the agent considerable freedom of interpretation, and a certain latitude in execution. For example, to cultivate one's mind is certainly a duty; but how, in what way, or up to what point? Shall it be done by the study of Sanscrit, or of Arithmetic? Shall we neglect for it the care of our health, the management of our affairs, the fulfilment of our duties? Assuredly not. Thus one cannot decide in just what way this kind of duties should be fulfilled: the free agent must choose and measure his intellectual culture. So we are commanded to give to the poor what is called our superfluities. But who shall decide the essential question, what is superfluous? Who shall fix the limit of the luxury permissible for each person? Thus there is no strict standard. The conscience of each one must decide; and the law can only say; Do the best you can.

These are the arguments advanced in behalf of the received distinction; and it is added that definite duties (which are also called complete duties) are generally *negative* — those

which consist in doing no evil. Indefinite duties are the *positive* ones, — those which consist in doing good. The first, it is said, are definite; for it is absolutely forbidden to do evil (whether it is injurious to ourselves or to others). The others are indefinite; for, as the domain of good is of infinite extent, there is no criterion which will permit us to fix its limits in one place or in another. Hence, in this case, the rule is, *so far as possible.* In the first, on the contrary, the rule is *never, not at all, not to the slightest extent.* Here it is absolute: there it is relative. This comes, as we see, from the nature of things.

This distinction is certainly important, and was an advance in the philosophical analysis of duties; but, if we examine it more closely, we shall see it disappear before a more exact and searching analysis.

Let us first consider how inconvenient are the terms adopted. Certainly the expression indefinite duties (*devoirs larges*) is unfortunate, were it only for its resemblance to that other expression, "an accommodating conscience" (*une conscience large*). It seems, besides, contradictory to say that a duty can be indefinite. The very name of duty implies an idea of strictness and of obligation. A duty from which one can release one's self when one wishes, and whose fulfilment one can defer to such time as one pleases; a duty which one fulfils as one chooses, at one's own time, to the extent one sees fit — all this is inconsistent, at least in appearance, with the very idea of duty, as this is generally understood.

I may say the same, also, of the received expressions, *perfect* and *imperfect* duties. Is it not objectionable to apply this last term to the most beautiful, noble, and generous of our duties? The duties of relieving distress, consoling the afflicted, caring for the sick, instructing children, are, in the pedantic language of the schools, merely imperfect duties; while, on the other hand, the duty of paying one's debts, which is sacred, indeed, but utterly prosaic, seems to be the type of perfect duties.

I am no better satisfied with the expression, *positive* and *negative* duties, the latter of which consist in doing no evil, the former in doing good. This distinction is much more apparent than real. Most duties may be expressed either positively or negatively. Justice, for example, was expressed by the ancients by means of these two formulas: *neminem lædere, suum cuique reddere.* The first is negative, the second positive; and the latter is the more exact of the two. Justice, in fact, does not merely forbid certain actions, but also enjoins others. For example, it forbids us to steal another person's property, and it commands us to restore what has been intrusted to our keeping.[1] If, moreover, we consider the distinction made by Aristotle between *commutative* and *distributive* justice, we shall see, that, in the second case, this virtue assumes a still more positive character. So, too, the duty of not lying might be expressed thus: "Always speak the truth when you are obliged to speak at all." The duty of not killing one's self is the same as the duty of preserving one's life. He who commits suicide by refusing to eat, kills himself by abstaining from an action: hence the precept which orders him to eat so that he may not die, is positive. Conversely, the duties called positive may be expressed in a negative way. For example, instead of saying, "Be grateful;" one might say, "Do not be ungrateful." Instead of saying, "Be charitable;" one might say, "Do not be selfish." The duty "not to render evil for evil" is a duty of charity, not of justice; yet it is negative in form. The forgiveness of injuries, clemency, and kindness to animals, consist in abstaining from certain actions: yet these are

[1] It will, perhaps, be said, that here *to restore* is synonymous with *not to steal*, and that the principle is therefore negative. I reply that there is this difference: in certain cases, in order to steal, it is necessary to *take;* in others (in the case of a thing intrusted to our keeping) it is sufficient to *keep*. In the first case, the theft consists in action (*taking*); in the second, in refraining from action (*not restoring*). Inversely, justice in the first case consists in abstaining (*not taking*), and in the second in acting (*restoring*). The duty is thus both negative and positive.

duties of humanity and of good will; that is to say, duties which are generally called *positive*.

Thus we see that these accepted distinctions, while valuable from the stand-point of the classification of duties, are, nevertheless, superficial and unsatisfactory distinctions, and that this terminology is unfortunate.

But it is time to leave words, and come to things. Let us return to the distinction between definite and indefinite duties, and let us see if this distinction can be maintained in the actual condition of science.

The fundamental error which I think I perceive in this distinction is, that it attributes to the very essence of duty — that is, to its form — what really belongs to its matter; that is to say, to the nature of the thing which is the object of duty. For example, if the object of duty is a material thing, definite, easily distinguished from any other, having a permanent identity, or a strict nominal value; finally, if it is a thing which is susceptible of being measured, defined, or determined — then we can easily understand that duty will assume a character of precision and exactitude which gives rise to the apparent existence of one special class of duties distinguishable from others.

It is for this reason, that, when it is desired to give an example of a definite duty, the case of a deposit which should be restored is selected. Undoubtedly this is a strict duty; but whence comes this sort of rigidity which the moral law assumes under these circumstances, which leaves the agent no freedom of interpretation? It depends solely on the material nature of the thing, which leaves no room for the liberty of the agent. I intrust to you my strong-box with all that it contains. What ought you to restore to me? My strong-box. Here, then, is no room whatever for argument. The thing is what it is: it cannot be confused with any thing else. It should return to my hands — it only, not some other. It is the same with a loan. I lend you one hundred francs. What ought you to return to me? One

hundred francs. The material identity is immaterial, the identity of value only is requisite; but, as this identity is perfect, the duty itself is exact.[1]

Here we do not take into account the question of interest. At this point the duty is no longer exactly defined. For in what does legitimate interest consist? No one can answer this positively. Sometimes it would be usury to lend at five per cent: sometimes fifty per cent would be a legitimate interest. So far as there are laws in regard to interest, there will undoubtedly be a criterion, and a usurer will be one who exacts more than the legal interest. But, as the variations and fluctuations of commerce do not permit these arbitrary limitations, more than legal interest is obtained by means of subterfuges which are approved by public opinion; and public banks adopt these publicly, with the consent and approval of all. This is not the same as saying that there is no such thing as usury, but merely that since interest is an essentially fluctuating and variable thing, depending on a thousand circumstances, there can be no absolute standard of usury. Duty here loses the strictness, not of its nature, but of its application.

It will be observed that examples of definite duties are almost always taken from duties which relate to property. This is because property consists usually of material things, which are consequently divisible, separable, subject to limitations, to barriers, to strict and well-defined etiquette (yet not always, for example, running waters and game — that is

[1] Here, again, there is some latitude. You intrust to me a deposit, your library, with permission to read it. If, by mischance, I spoil one of your books, will it not be sufficient for me to give you another copy? In most cases this would be perfectly satisfactory. But, if it should happen to be a rare and unique copy, the replacing it would not be equivalent to a restoration. Thus, as we see, the nature of the object always determines the absolute strictness of the duty.

Recently the question has been brought before the tribunals, whether a banker ought to restore precisely the same bonds (that is to say, the exact numbers) which were deposited with him. Very good lawyers have held that the ordinary rules of civil law as to deposits do not apply in such cases.

to say, things which are mobile). In the second place, property is established and guaranteed by the law, which, whenever material exactitude is lacking, introduces moral exactitude, and establishes strict distinctions. Thanks to these two reasons, the *thine* and the *mine* are determined with considerable precision in civil society; and one can understand how the *reddere suum* may have appeared to moralists to be distinguished from other duties by an air of strict constraint and inflexible obligation which does not belong to the others.

But, even in considering these questions which relate to justice, we shall see that duties become less and less fixed in proportion as the thing which is their object becomes less and less clearly definable. I have just shown this in regard to usury: it is the same with trade. Justice undoubtedly requires that one should not sell at too high a price, nor buy too cheaply. But what is it to sell too dear, or to buy too cheap? This cannot be defined. A celebrated socialistic school defines commerce as "the art of buying for three cents what is worth six, and of selling for six cents what is worth three." But is a thing worth absolutely six cents, or three cents? Does not political economy teach us that all values are relative; that what you buy for six cents is worth six cents to you, or you would not buy it; that what you sell for three cents is worth only three cents to you, or you would not sell it? The value of a thing is the final sum agreed upon by the buyer and seller after free discussion. This is the strict economic law. However, we feel plainly that he who takes advantage of the need of the seller, or of the need of the buyer, in order to buy a thing more cheaply, or to sell it at a higher price, does not act in a manner which can be called strictly just from a moral stand-point, whatever it may be from a legal point of view. But where shall we find a standard? How far is it permissible to profit by the needs of one's fellow-creatures? There can be no fixed law for this.

If the duties of justice are thus indefinite, even when exchange is in question, they will become still more so when we take a higher stand-point. The *suum cuique* does not apply to material things alone, but also to moral things. Here the duties of justice are certainly no less strict than in the former case. But it will be readily seen, that, from the very nature of their object, they resemble, in their indefiniteness, and latitude of application, the duties which are called indefinite.

For instance, let us consider the duties of distributive justice, the formula of which is, Render to each one according to his works. How can the relations of reward and merit be settled with exactitude? For example, if it is asked; Who should be appointed to fill a certain position, either public or private? every one will answer, The most worthy person. But the question is, how to decide who is the most worthy. Shall it be decided by age, or by merit? In the former case you discourage talent: in the latter you discourage labor. Now, labor and talent are the two conditions of merit. Then let us consider talent: which should we esteem most highly, solid or brilliant talent, rapidity of conception, or thoroughness of execution? Clearly, no formula can here teach us how to distinguish between the *mine* and the *thine*. Each one must compose for himself all these elements, and draw from them a result, which will necessarily vary with different people. Such are the difficulties encountered by all who have to decide on the career of men or the choice of individuals. The same difficulties meet all who conduct examinations, confer prizes, have the direction of elections, either literary or political, etc. In all these cases, which are innumerable, the *suum cuique* is essentially indefinite. Hence duty leaves much to the initiative and responsibility of each individual.

Among the duties of justice is classed also the duty of gratitude. Gratitude is certainly just as strict a duty as is legal justice. But how vague and indefinite is its applica-

tion! I have sold you a house. What do you owe me? The price agreed upon. I have lent you a plough. What must you give back to me? A plough. But I have done you a service. What must you give back to me? That is the question. Undoubtedly you owe me gratitude; but in what way? This is left entirely to the tact and the conscience of the individual. Here strict exactitude, far from being in conformity with the spirit of this kind of duty, is directly opposed to it. It is almost forbidden to pay cash down. For example, one who, having received a service from you, should rack his brains how to render you the same service the next day, would thereby prove a vanity and lack of delicacy such as would make him dread remaining an instant under the yoke of a benefit, which would in itself be a sort of ingratitude.[1] It is also indelicate to repay in a material way a moral service. What should one do, then, to show his gratitude? Sometimes this can be done by an efficient service when an occasion naturally arises; sometimes by delicate attentions, by proofs of affection, by acts which are beyond measurement and beyond rule. There are the same difficulties in regard to the duration of gratitude. Unquestionably there are services for which one should be grateful all one's life. Is this true of all? Is a single service done you, sufficient to bind you perpetually, to take from you all your rights, to require of you an unlimited dependence? How many questions arise which can be answered only by the heart! Why is this? It is not at all due to the nature of the duty considered abstractly, but only to the nature of the object. Here, not *things*, but *feelings*, are in question. Now, while things are ponderable, measurable, and definite, the feelings can be tried by no weight, by no measure. The duty may be none the less strict, though its application is indefinite.

Kant has several times enumerated among the strictest

[1] Just as the giving of a dinner immediately after having received a benefit is an impolite politeness from its very haste.

duties that of treating man as a person, and not as a thing, of respecting him as an *end in himself*, and not using him as a *means* — in a word, that of not making other men our slaves. Nothing can be clearer and more exact than this principle, so long as we consider slavery either in its material or in its legal form; that is to say, so long as we make it a fixed and definite type. But, beyond these limits, the duty becomes vague precisely like the indefinite duties. For example, I represent slavery to myself very clearly under the form of a man loaded with chains, or confined in a cell; or I represent it by one attached to the soil — that is, not being allowed to leave a certain given territory; or by one bought and sold, having a market price, or not having the right of property, or not being able to contract marriage, etc. Here are clear and definite features, by the aid of which I can easily give form to the duty mentioned above, not to treat man as a thing. But if I pass from physical and legal slavery to moral slavery, which is no less to be condemned, by what signs shall I recognize it? If I exercise such an influence over a man that at length I destroy his will, and make him the blind instrument of my passions or of my designs, is not this treating the man as a thing, and using him as a means? Yet is there not a natural influence which men exercise over one another? Is not this influence the best result of society? Shall we condemn the authority exercised by the more enlightened over the ignorant, by man over woman, by age over youth? Where, then, is the natural limit of this legitimate authority? This cannot be determined beforehand by any formula, since here we have no longer a physical or legal state, but a state of the soul. The physical or legal state is a fixed and exact thing: the interior state of the soul is a variable and infinite thing, which cannot be brought under any absolute type, and in which we can find no strict boundary line between liberty and servitude. Hence comes the indefiniteness of virtue when applied to this new field.

It is the same in regard to our duties to ourselves. We shall always find that definiteness in duty is due to the definiteness of the object, and that the strictest duties become indefinite in proportion as the object itself becomes so. For example, it is a strict duty not to kill one's self: nothing could be more definite.[1] But why? Because there is a decided and definite difference between life and death. There is no greater or lesser degree, intermediate between these two states. Whoever is not dead, is living to a certain extent; and one cannot die without dying completely. Here is a clear and sharp distinction, which gives this duty an absolute precision. But consider, now, the duty of not injuring one's health — a duty which is evidently just as strict as the preceding, since it is its corollary. Cannot every one see that this duty becomes indefinite because health itself is indefinite? Who can tell precisely what health is? There is no such thing as absolute health. Every one suffers more or less in some particular. One who should attempt to fulfil strictly the duty of keeping well would then be constantly pre-occupied with thoughts of his condition, thus sacrificing more serious duties, and even injuring his health itself by taking too much care of it. Besides, just what ought one to do in order to keep well? Should one weigh out one's food, like Cornaro? Should one regulate his life as by clock-work? Should one, like Kant, make it a rule never to speak in the open air, so as to avoid breathing through the mouth, which he believed to be injurious to the chest? Cannot every one see that these precautions are unworthy of a man, and that frequently they militate against the very end which they are intended to serve? One should, then, do as one can, and as one wills, provided that one avoids useless and unreasonable imprudences, and that one uses

[1] As yet we will not consider the difficulties which arise from the conflict of duties, of which I shall speak later (see chap. vii.). For example, did not he who voluntarily threw himself into a gulf to save his country commit suicide? and is not such a suicide legitimate?

manly precautions with moderation. But do we not thus transform a strict duty into one that is indefinite? This is the necessary result, not of the duty itself, but of the substance of the duty.

Of all duties to ourselves, the one which seems to present the strictest character is that of not lying. Here, again, it is the substance of the duty which occasions its exactitude. What, indeed, is the subject of this duty? It is speech, and speech in its relation to thought. Now, speech, or articulate sound, is a material phenomenon which is limited and definite. One word is clearly distinguished from another word because of articulation. It is, then, an exact thing. Furthermore, each word corresponds to an idea; and any one who does not examine the matter too closely may readily believe that there is a strict and constant relation between the two. This relation is at least sufficiently defined for all the practical purposes of life. For example, if any one asks you; Did you see a certain person perform a certain action? the relation of the words to the ideas is sufficiently exact to prevent the question from having two meanings, and the words which can be used in reply will also have but one. Hence comes the strict obligation not to use words save for the expression of thought.[1] But when this sort of duty is represented as absolutely strict, and without any indefiniteness in application, it is because merely the expression of thought by speech is considered. Now, this is far from being the sole manifestation of thought. Further, speech is here regarded merely as the expression of thought, while it is also the expression of the feelings. Now,

[1] I would also remark, that, from a strict point of view, a pedantic morality might regard all rhetorical figures as violations of the duty of sincerity. "Achilles is a lion," you say. No, he is not a lion: he is merely like a lion. You do not speak the exact truth. Instead of saying, He is dead, *mortuus est*, the Latins said, *Fuit*, he once existed. That is not the whole truth. Why will you lead my mind away from the thing itself, and draw its attention to another idea which enfeebles the truth? All these refinements of language are only weaker forms of crude truth, and consequently they are half false. Alcestes himself, in spite of his excessive severity, lies in saying, "*I do not say that*," when it is precisely what he means to say.

while the expression of thought may be the object of a strict and definite law, is it the same with the expression of the feelings? And if speech, as a means of expression, is amenable to law, is the same thing true of the face, or of every other mode of expression?

Thus sometimes the things expressed are of an indefinite character, sometimes the medium of expression is itself indefinite. Hence the relation of the sign to the thing signified becomes more and more vague, and at last can be subjected to no precise rule. Who can be under obligation to express with absolute correctness the interior state of his soul, since that is impossible? Who can be under obligation to make note of all possible facial expressions, so as to apply each of them to each of the states of the soul to which they naturally correspond? No morality ever went so far as that, because it would be absurd. Rather, the language of the features has always been regarded as free from the dominion of the law which controls speech. For example, the wise man is commanded to hide his suffering under the mask of serenity: we admire a man who can smile while suffering anxiety and anguish of mind. But to keep a placid countenance when the heart is breaking, is not this really to change the relation between the sign and the thing signified? What difference is there between a physician who deceives his patient by words, and a friend who deceives you by his looks and smiles? Will you tell a woman who, in spite of herself, feels a passion against which she struggles, that, to be sincere, she ought to express this passion in her looks and her features? Most certainly not. Whence come these differences? From the fact, that as the physiognomy gives a succession of varying and indefinite signs,[1] for which

[1] I am far from meaning that one may not lie with one's physiognomy, as when, for instance, one shows a friendly face to one whom one is determined to ruin.

"I embrace my rival, but it is that I may strangle him."

But I do say that the duty becomes indefinite in proportion as the signs become more vague.

no exact alphabet can be given, we have been led to permit to this language a certain latitude which articulate speech is not allowed.

We have just seen that the greater part of the duties called definite become indefinite when circumstances are altered. Conversely, indefinite duties become strictly defined when circumstances are changed. For example, we say that the duty of doing good to men is an indefinite duty; because no one can determine *à priori* the when, how, or how much (*quando*, *quomodo*, *quantum*).

But imagine a rich man in the presence of one who is dying of hunger: could any one say that the duty of the former to help the latter is an indefinite duty, which leaves him at all at liberty to defer its fulfilment? Certainly not: the definiteness of the circumstances renders the duty equally precise, more so, perhaps, than any duty whatever of justice. All the elementary duties of charity are of this sort. So are those which were recognized even by the most ignorant of the ancients, which Cicero rehearses: "To give fire to him who asks it, to show the way to him who is lost, to give honest advice to one who is making up his mind," etc. Those elementary duties are included in the duties of benevolence and humanity. Yet they are definite duties. But vary and multiply the circumstances, and the duty of humanity then becomes more and more indefinite, in proportion as it concerns more complex situations, or goods of a more ethereal nature, such as consolation, instruction, labor, etc.

A more profound theory of definite and indefinite duties is that which bases the former upon the idea of right. A definite duty is one which corresponds to the right (which can never be violated under any pretext). An indefinite duty is one for which there is no corresponding right: thus it is said, justice is a definite duty, because it is respect for the rights of others (not taking the property, or the life, or the honor, of citizens). Charity is an indefinite duty, be-

cause no man has a right to the charity of others. As a corollary to this theory, it is added that right implies the power of constraint: this is why you can be compelled to practice justice, but not charity.

Nothing can be truer than this theory up to a certain point, and there is danger of destroying, in trying to perfect, it. It is certain that we must in the first place make sure that rights will be respected, and for this purpose we must admit that there is something inviolable to which definite duty corresponds. I will readily grant this, provided it is admitted that this is merely the minimum, and that the domain of right includes much more than that which can be accomplished under constraint.

It is the same with right as with duty. Sometimes it is definite, sometimes indefinite. It is definite whenever it can be represented under a material form, exerting itself within time and space, in concrete and determinable acts. It is here, in this domain, that constraint is a legitimate and possible means of action. But, beyond and above this, there is another, a purely moral, domain from which right is not absent, but in which it becomes indefinite, like duty itself, and where constraint is inapplicable. For instance, liberty of thought is a right; and consequently it is a duty in strict justice not to interfere with other men's liberty of thought, so far as that does not itself interfere with others. Very well; but, when this right is represented as something inviolable and absolute, it is always implied that this refers to the exterior expression of the thought, as by the publication of a book, or by public speaking. It is on condition that you give to this right this material and external form or symbol, that you will find in it something fixed and definite before which all constraint should pause. But putting aside the very complicated question of the conflict of rights, as we have just before set aside that of the conflict of duties, it must be said that the right goes far beyond the limits here established. Men have a right to free thought, not only

externally, but internally. Freedom of the press concerns, or seems to concern, only writers;[1] but freedom of internal thought is the right of each one of us. Now, this interior freedom cannot be affected by the action of the state (except indirectly by the repression of the other), but it may be assailed and violated at any moment by any one of us in his relations to others. It may be so in education, for instance, if the method of authority is abused, if laws are laid down without permitting or teaching the mind to discover them for itself. It may be so in the intercourse of intelligent minds with those which are not so, by presenting to the latter only one side of a subject, while knowing that they are incapable of perceiving the other without assistance. There is, then, a source of oppression which has no material and fixed standard, but which, pushed to an extreme, would result in the actual annihilation of individual freedom. Yet who can fix the precise limit and degree of this? For instance, how can we determine to what extent the method of authority should be adopted in education?[2] We may, indeed, say that it is the duty of education to offer the greatest possible freedom to the disciple. But the *quantum* of this liberty cannot be determined in advance, for it depends upon the pupil's strength of mind. Moreover, however strong he may be, it is necessary to furnish him with the materials for thought before he knows how to use them; and therefore the method of authority is, to some extent, necessary and

[1] This is why the common people have never taken up this cause enthusiastically, except as a pretext. It is not the same with liberty of conscience, the right of property, etc.

[2] We know that the analytical method, which compels the mind of the pupil to find for itself the desired solution, is better suited to develop mental freedom than is the synthetic method, which deduces the solution from principles previously laid down. But would it not be ridiculous to make it a duty to prefer analysis to synthesis? Do we not know that the choice must depend on a thousand things, especially the ability of the teacher, since it is very difficult to teach by analysis? It has been said a thousand times, that the teacher should follow the Socratic method; but it is much easier to say that than to do it. Only one Socrates has ever lived.

inevitable. The same is true of intercourse between the wise and the simple. To tell the latter every thing, would be to make them absolutely incapable of choosing, for it is frequently in this that wisdom itself consists. It follows that the right of thinking for one's self (excepting as regards the material symbol of a book or of speech) is essentially indefinite, and that the duties which correspond to it are equally so.

We may say the same thing of freedom of conscience as of freedom of thought. So long as we represent it to ourselves by means of material symbols (such, for example, as the right of assembling together in a temple, of writing and speaking freely, of praying in a certain way, of making use of certain ceremonies, etc.), the right is perfectly definite, and the duty corresponding to such a right is definite. But I say that the right goes far beyond this, for it is not enough to be respected materially: I have a right to be respected morally. Whoever insults my faith or my opinion, not only grieves and wounds me (which might be contrary merely to charity), but also tends to the interdiction of the public expression of my belief, and thus he assails my right and my freedom. For instance, individuals are fully justified in saying that their liberty is assailed when their opinions are represented as shameful, odious, subversive; for by this means a prejudice against them is created, so that those who mentally hold the same opinions will be afraid or ashamed to profess them. But the very same unbelievers who complain that they are slandered, do not think it wrong when they themselves act in a precisely similar way, in accusing the opinions contrary to theirs of being silly, blind, and degrading superstitions, etc.: thus they also create a prejudice against these same doctrines, and it takes a certain amount of courage to risk the loss of human respect.[1] But to what extent should we

[1] It is quite true, that, in actual society (outside of certain definite circles), it takes quite as much courage to have a great deal of faith as it does to be very sceptical. Only moderate opinions prevail, and are well received — or

carry this respect for the beliefs of others? Who can answer? Should we carry it so far as to pay no attention to them, and neither combat nor refute them? But this would require a preliminary truce between all opinions, for it is just that when one is attacked he should defend himself. Such a truce would be a pure chimera. Moreover, it is my right, not only to profess the truth, but to propagate it. I cannot believe that I possess the truth without believing that others are in error: if so, must it not be my duty to undeceive men? And, if it is my duty, it is plainly my right. Thus neither criticism, discussion, nor polemics, can be forbidden. But, looking at the matter more closely, we shall see that the most offensive thing that can be said to a man is, that he is mistaken. In whatever way this may be done, he will always think it done badly, and will take offence. All who have ever been engaged in a controversy, know that there is but one way of satisfying the adversary with whom one argues; and that is, to tell him that he is right. I am under obligation to respect your rights, but not your susceptibility; I owe respect to your character, but not to your errors; and an excess of politeness might be treason to the truth. Again, if an opinion is not immoral, I certainly ought not to regard it as being so; but, if it is, why should I not say so? I ought not to call a noble and generous faith an ignoble superstition; but, if there is such a thing as an ignoble superstition, why should I not say so? From all these considerations, we see how delicate and difficult a matter it is to fix the limits which shall separate criticism from abuse. Abuse violates the liberty of another, but the renunciation of all criticism violates my own. There must be a mean between the two which cannot be fixed by any

what is preferred still more, silence is enjoined. From this we see how contrary to free thought is the system of mutual recriminations; for it tends to produce a negative and dull mediocrity, which is not without hypocrisy. Those who attack faith most violently as being under suspicion of hypocrisy, do not see that they contribute to this result quite as much as do the others.

absolute rule. The duty is, then, indefinite, because the right itself is so.[1]

As a criterion for definite and indefinite duties, it has been said that the first, corresponding to rights, may be enforced by constraint, and that the second cannot be. For instance, we may constrain a man to pay his debts: we cannot constrain him to give alms. This criterion is altogether insufficient for these reasons: —

First, It does not apply to every case — for instance, to our duties toward ourselves; for a man cannot constrain himself by force to fulfil his duties toward himself. The duty of telling the truth cannot be enforced by constraint — except so far as it is a social duty. Even in matters of social duty, there are definite duties which cannot be enforced by constraint; for instance, distributive justice, gratitude, and the duties of sons to their parents, are definite, but constraint can be applied only so far as they are material. For example, the law will compel a son to give his father food, but it will not compel him to love and respect him in his heart.[2] Must we, then, regard family duties as indefinite?

Second, The right of constraint cannot serve to compel recognition of the right; for it is itself but a consequence of that right, and can be employed only on condition that the right which is to be protected has been previously established. It is not the right of constraint upon which the other right is based, but that other right involves as its corollary the right of constraint.[3] Hence, to know just how far I may make use of constraint (that of the law) to compel respect for my conscience and my faith, I must first know

[1] Excellent remarks upon duty in a case of philosophical controversy will be found in Thurot's book: *La Raison et l'Entendement* (Paris, 1883), t. i., p. 328.

[2] Here, too, duty cannot be strictly determined, save from the material point of view. One should never be lacking in respect to one's parents in material things: but, as to interior respect, that does not depend upon the will; for no effort could make me wish to respect one whom I should see and know to be in a condition which is unworthy of respect.

[3] See this deduction in Kant, *Rechtslehre*.

how far this right extends. It is not until the true limits of abuse and criticism are determined that I (or the law in my place) may compel the cessation of abuse. And just here we encounter that almost insuperable difficulty in this problem, which has led right-minded people to agree more and more fully in demanding that no constraint shall be employed in this case, believing that the reconciling of liberties will be better accomplished by custom and by reciprocal concessions than by a rude intervention from without, which always threatens to strike down the right when striking at an abuse.

Third, In some cases a desire for liberty is all that is needed for its exercise: the violation of the right consists, then, in blinding the desire, or putting it to sleep. This is the case in moral or intellectual tyranny. In such a case the right of constraint is impossible, so long as the right is unconscious of its own violation; and it becomes unnecessary so soon as this consciousness is aroused. For instance, you desire to retain me in intellectual servitude; but so soon as I perceive this, I have only to will, and the servitude ceases. You give me poor reasons: I have only to make objections, and you will be forced to give me good ones. If, however, I do not perceive any thing of this, of what use will my right to force you to respect my reason be to me?

Finally, to sum up this whole discussion, if you consider a duty in itself, in relation to its form, you will see that there is no such thing as an indefinite duty. A duty is a duty: if it were not completely a duty, it would not be one at all. To admit that a duty may be indefinite in itself and in its essence, is to admit that it is not entirely a duty, that it is so more or less, which is a contradiction. In this sense, every duty is definite.

On the other hand, if we consider duty in relation to its substance, to the thing commanded, we shall see that the duty is absolutely definite only when its substance is a physical, limited, and measurable object, recognizable by

definite signs. But so soon as duty rises higher, when it applies to more spiritual things, to the soul, to the feelings, and, generally speaking, to any object whatever whose nature is undefined, then the duty itself becomes undefined. This is what is signified by the expression indefinite duties, which, far from designating the lowest and least of our duties, refers, on the contrary, to those that are noblest, purest, and most spiritual.

CHAPTER IV.

RIGHT AND DUTY.

THUS far we have inquired into the nature and the basis of duty, without concerning ourselves with another idea which is in a certain sense correlative to it, and is rarely separated from it; that is, the idea of right. It was only incidentally that this idea was introduced in the preceding chapter. Yet, according to certain schools, right is the basis and essential principle of duty: it is because there are rights that there are duties. Hence the idea of right should precede that of duty, and it is only by establishing the former that we can obtain a firm foundation for the latter. According to other philosophers, on the contrary, right is based upon duty. It is necessary to investigate this question. Let us first endeavor to determine what we are to understand by the word right (*droit*).

Leibnitz gives a definition of right (*droit*) which may serve as our point of departure: "Right" (*droit*), he says, "is a *moral power*, as duty is a moral necessity." To comprehend this definition thoroughly, we must first distinguish the different meanings of the word.

The name *droit*[1] is given, first, to that science which devotes itself to defining the rights of man, either natural, civil, or international. Hence comes what we call *civil* law (*droit* civil), international law (*droit* des gens), *natural* law (*droit* naturel), penal law (*droit* pénal), etc. All of these

[1 The whole force of this introduction depends upon the fact that in French *droit* has a wider and more varied signification than right in English. This is obvious from the text. — *Trans.*]

special sciences are included in a more general one, which is called *le Droit* (Doctrine of rights).

If from the science of law (*droit*) we pass to its object, which bears the same name, we shall find that the word still has two meanings.

1. It means, taken abstractly, that civil or natural law (*droit*) which regulates the relations between men or citizens, and which tells them what is forbidden or permitted. Hence the early jurisconsults, adopting a somewhat doubtful etymology, derived the word *jus justum* (*droit*) from *jussum* (that which is ordained). It is in this sense that Alcestes, in *The Misanthrope*, uses the word *droit*, when he says, —

"When I have on my side *droit*, good sense and equity."

Hefe he evidently means that justice, or abstract right, is on his side and against his adversary. *Droit* here signifies the law of right itself.

2. But the word has still another application, and this is the one whose true and exact meaning should be carefully studied. Right (*droit*) is a prerogative belonging to men, which they may exercise if they see fit. Thus, to have the right of possession, means to have the prerogative and the power of possessing: to have the right to marry, means to have the prerogative and the power of marrying. It is in this sense, the true sense of the word, that Leibnitz could say that *droit* (right) is a "moral power."

From this latter meaning we can readily return to the preceding ones, and familiarize ourselves with the usual equivocations to which this expression gives rise.

Thus man receives from nature or society certain *aptitudes* or *powers:* these are his *rights* (*droits*). The law (natural or civil) which regulates these powers, and determines their relations, is the *droit;* and the science which investigates this law is also the *droit.* Thus the science, the law, and the power, bear the same name; and it may be said that a jurisconsult is one who takes for his study the

science (*droit*) which has for its object the law (called *droit*) which regulates the relations between the prerogatives or aptitudes (called *droits*) of men or of citizens.

Having cleared away these equivocations, let us try to understand distinctly the meaning of Leibnitz' definition; *Right is a moral power.*

Generally speaking, we call any cause which is capable of producing or of arresting an action, a *power* or *force*. Thus, in mechanics, every thing which causes motion or repose is called a *force*. Now, any thing which is able to arrest the action of a force or a power, may justly itself be called a force or power, whatever may be its nature otherwise. For instance, suppose I have in my hands a hammer, and that before me lies a sleeping child. Undoubtedly, if I choose, I can break the child's head with the hammer; yet I do not do it; however great may be the force at my command, there is something present which stops me — an invisible, ideal obstacle, more forcible than all my force, a power more powerful than all my power, and sufficient to disarm mine. This power, of which the child is not even conscious, is the right which every living creature of my species has to retain its life, so long as it does not assail that of another.

Do you say that in this case the power that arrests me is my sympathy, my feeling for a weak and innocent creature, rather than a right of which I am not even thinking at the moment? A different example will give an equally clear illustration. I find a treasure. I know to whom it belongs, but no one save myself knows of its existence. He is rich, I am poor. Thus there is no chance for any feeling of sympathy. I have the physical power to appropriate the treasure, but I am arrested by the thought that it does not belong to me, but to another. That something which arrests me, which counterbalances the physical power that I could so easily exercise, is right.

Right is, then, a power, a force, since it arrests the action of a person's power and force. Yet it is not a physical force

of the same nature with that which it arrests. There is nothing in the object of the right, nothing in the person who is the subject of the right, which is of such a nature as to oppose any obstacle to my force. Mechanics cannot find here the equivalent of the hidden or latent force which might, but does not, act. It is a power, but it is a moral power.

Perhaps it would be more correct to call this power ideal, rather than moral. Moral power is a force acting in conjunction with reflection and conscience, an energy, a true activity, like virtue. But right may exist without being exercised: it may exist when the one possessing it is ignorant of it (as in the case of the unconscious owner of the treasure, or as in that of the sleeping child). We have here a power which is accompanied neither by energy, nor by effort, nor by action, yet which arrests me just as effectually as if it were a physical force equal to my own. This power consists simply in an *idea* — the idea that a certain object does not belong to me, that a certain man is my fellow-creature. This is an ideal power, and this ideal power is what I call the right.

Let us apply this idea to every case in which what we call right becomes manifest to us. We shall see that we can always do so with good reason.

There are three principal cases: either I have the power without having the right, or I have the right without having the power, or I have at the same time both the power and the right. In the first case my power surpasses my right, in the second it is inferior to it, and in the third they are equal. When my power surpasses the right, one force absorbs another; but the latter does not cease to exist; and, although destitute of power, it is none the less a force. We see the same thing in the second case; for, if I have the right without having the power, I compel my oppressor to exert a greater degree of force than he would otherwise have needed. For instance, an oppressed nation compels its oppressor to

use more effort and more violence than would be necessary if the people were voluntarily obedient. Thus we see that right is a force which counterbalances power. Finally, when the power is equal to the right, we may say that there is a double power, as in the case of parents, where there is both physical power and that of reason.

Unquestionably there are cases in which the right seems destitute of any power — for instance, when he who possesses it is unconscious of it, and makes no effort to defend or recover it, as in the case previously cited of a treasure, the very existence of which is unknown to the true owner. But here it is the same with right as with duty. Duty is a necessity which does not necessitate any thing, and right is a power which is powerless. This is why the one is a moral necessity, and the other is a moral, or ideal, power. In other words, right, like duty, is only an *idea*. An idea does not act by itself. Human activity must always take the initiative. Physical force can, then, always override the idea, and sometimes can even do this without any extra exertion. Nevertheless, the idea remains, and it exerts its power either through the conscience, or in the memory, of men; and finally, even if all these means of action are interdicted, it still survives. Oppressed, despoiled, vanquished, it is yet more noble than that which defies it, and more sovereign than that which tramples it in the dust.

The idea of right having been made clear by the preceding explanations, let us now consider what is its basis, and whether right is founded upon duty, or duty upon right.

If right is anterior to duty, we must admit that it is founded upon the very nature of man, and that it is anterior to all morality. But we may answer this question in various ways. We may say with Spinoza, Hobbes, and Proudhon, that right (*droit*) is based upon force; or with certain socialists, that it is founded upon necessity; or finally, with Kant, and above all with Fichte, that its basis is human liberty.

The first theory, which bases right upon force, is simply

the suppression of right itself. If we use the word force or power equivocally; if, with Spinoza, we distinguish two kinds of states — the state of nature and the state of reason; and if we base the right upon the power of reason — then we merely express in other words the same idea which I have already explained; that is, that right is an ideal power. But we still need to explain why this power is not invariably the strongest. The antinomy of force and right shows plainly that there is in right something ideal, which is always sacred, even though it may never be visibly realized. Now, what we need to explain is, how an idea can be able to arrest force, or, if it does not arrest it, how it is able to judge and condemn it. If there is not something which is called duty, why should force be arrested by any thing? Suppress the idea of duty and phenomena will no longer have any law but the laws of physics: every thing which is, ought to be; and, as Hobbes says, every thing which is necessary is legitimate.

The theory which bases right upon necessity seems at first more generous than the preceding, but in an ultimate analysis it comes to the same thing. In fact, necessity is something vague and indefinite: we need every thing which we desire. To base right upon necessity is equivalent to saying, with Hobbes, that every man has a right to every thing that he desires. But, as he may desire every thing, this is the same as saying that he has a right to every thing; and as every man has the same right to every thing, this will mean the war of all against all. In such a war, who shall be arbitrator if not force, or, if it is desired to avoid using force, a convention which must itself be sustained by force? If necessity is not understood to mean every kind of desire in general, but only what are called legitimate and necessary desires, who shall fix the limit of the legitimate and necessary? Shall it be confined to the strictest sense — that is, what is necessary to sustain life? Then all the most noble and charming gifts of the imagination will be proscribed as illicit and corrupting. Shall we admit superfluities as well as

necessaries? To what superfluities shall the right of each be limited? Finally, does necessity include the free and natural exercise of our faculties? Then we pass unconsciously over to the third theory, which bases right, not upon feeling or necessity, but upon liberty.

This third theory is the most solid and noble. It assumes human liberty as a fact. Man is free, and this freedom makes him a moral personality. Now, it is said, it is the essential characteristic of liberty that it is inviolable; for, when we speak of freedom, we speak of a power whose essence it is to choose between two actions, and consequently to be the cause of the action chosen. Whoever abridges our liberty acts, then, in opposition to the nature of things. Thus he destroys the very essence of man. To overpower or restrict one's liberty is to transform him from a person to a thing. Hence liberty is sacred; it is the basis of right; and, having postulated right, duty naturally flows from it. In a word, the formula of this theory is, that freedom is necessarily free, and that it would be a self-contradiction were it otherwise. Right is simply the liberty of freedom. This proposition, "Human personality is inviolable," is, then, to use the language of Kant, an analytical proposition; that is to say, the attribute of the proposition is inevitably included in the subject.

According to this theory, nothing can be simpler than the question of moral obligation. Duty is a self-evident consequence of right, and right is a self-evident consequence of liberty. Consequently it is unnecessary to seek for any higher principle as the basis of obligation. Nothing can be simpler, doubtless, but nothing can be less certain.

When it is stated as a self-evident proposition, "The human personality is inviolable," what is meant? Is it inviolable in fact, or in justice? In fact? Plainly not, since every day right utters its protest against force. In justice? This remains to be proved. Inviolable may mean either of two things — something that *cannot* be violated, or something

that *ought not* to be so. Now, personality is not inviolable in the former sense: it undoubtedly can be, since it so often is, violated. Then, it is only in the second sense that it is inviolable, but to say that it *ought not* to be violated is to say that it is the duty of others not to violate it. But why is it their duty? This is the point to be explained. To admit as a self-evident fact that the moral personality is inviolable in the second sense of that word, is to admit the existence of a self-evident primitive duty. To do this is not basing duty upon right. Suppose that, as yet, there were no such thing as duty: then I see no reason why human personality should be more sacred than any thing else. Whence comes this sacred character which I arbitrarily impute to it? Setting aside the idea of duty, liberty is, in my view, no more precious than any other force of nature. If I may divert a brook from its natural channel, I do not see why I may not turn the liberty of another away from its natural course to subserve my own interests.

It may be said that the essential character of liberty is that it is free, and that therefore, if we constrain the liberty of another, we violate the nature of things, and commit a self-evident contradiction. According to this hypothesis, injustice is an absurdity. But I answer, that, in the strict meaning of the word, what is absurd is absolutely impossible: a self-evident contradiction is inconsistent with existence. From the very fact that a thing is absurd, contrary to the nature of things, it is clear that it does not, and can not, exist. Hence, if I violate liberty, I undoubtedly do what is unjust, bad, and absurd morally, but not logically. Such an act cannot be contrary to the nature of things, since it is a reality. Doubtless it is impossible that a free will should not be a free will; but then, in that sense, I am utterly powerless against it. I cannot do violence to the interior will of one who desires to resist my constraint. But that the free will, inevitably free in itself, should be so also in its manifestations, in the exercise of its powers; that it should be so in

speech, in labor, in the things acquired, etc. — all this is by no means inevitable, nor is it logically implied in the conception of a free will. It is, then, by a gratuitous affirmation that we pass from the inviolability of the free will, considered in itself, to that of its *external manifestations;* for it is passing from the first meaning of the word to its second, from that which *cannot* be violated to that which *ought not* to be so. Free will, considered in itself, cannot be violated; and consequently it is superfluous to say that it ought not to be so. Taken in its manifestations, it undoubtedly ought not to be violated, but it can be; and it is necessary to demonstrate why this should not be done. In a word, the proposition, "Human personality is inviolable," is thoroughly analytical in the first sense, but it is also useless and tautological: in the second sense it is true and instructive, but it is synthetical, and requires demonstration; it is not a self-evident proposition, and cannot serve as the foundation of morality.

Hence I do not believe that duty is based upon right. Is it true that right is based upon duty? No more so than the converse. See, for instance, how a distinguished moralist has expressed himself:

"The law of duty imprints upon my whole being, upon all my faculties, and above all upon my liberty, the august character with which it is itself invested; for he who desires the end, desires the means also. It is this which makes me an object to be respected by my fellow-creatures, and makes them the object of my respect. It is this which constitutes me a person — that is to say, a being who belongs only to himself: it is this, finally, which constitutes right; right exists only through duty." [1]

I cannot accept this point of view, which returns to what I have already called purely formal moral science; which calls duty a principle, instead of calling it what it really is — a consequence. It is duty, you say, which imprints dignity upon my faculties. Then they have none in themselves if the law of duty is taken away. But, if this is true, whence

[1] Ad. Franck, *Morale pour tous.*

does duty itself come? Are there not, among other duties, duties toward myself, such as temperance? What obligation is there to the fulfilment of these duties if not that of respecting my own faculties? And if these faculties have in themselves no dignity, nothing august and sacred, why should I be required to respect, and not to degrade, them? For instance, why ought I to prefer the goods of the soul to those of the body; and, among the goods of the soul, why prefer those of the mind and heart to those of the passions? Similarly, if human nature has not already in itself, as it exists in my fellow-creatures, something august and sacred (*homo res sacra homini*), why should I be required to respect in them something which has no intrinsic value? Are we not turning in a vicious circle if we base duty upon the respect due to human nature, and this respect itself upon the law of duty? If there were no difference between man and the brutes, there would be no reason why a man should not treat himself and his fellow-creatures as he would the brutes. If man were not composed of soul and body, there would be no reason why he should, in himself or in others, prefer the soul to the body. If there were not a common bond of identity and community of nature between men, there would be no reason why one ought to treat one's fellow-creatures as brothers. Thus the dignity of human nature is not based upon duty: it is upon the dignity of human nature, which is the same in others as in ourselves, that duty is founded.

Thus I do not admit either that duty is based upon right, or that right is based upon duty. But duty and right are established at the same time, in the same act, by the same principle, the principle of the essential perfection of the human being — in a word, upon the dignity of man, on which I am not at liberty to infringe, either in myself or in another.

Let us recall some of the principles already stated, and we shall see how from these same principles may flow two series of consequences, one of which constitutes the philosophy of duty, and the other the philosophy of right.

I cannot, it has been said, conceive the perfection of my being without desiring it. This superior will, in so far as it commands the inferior will, is *duty*.

But this perfection which duty enjoins upon me, and which is the object of virtue, is such that it must be attained by the efforts of each individual. One of the characteristics of the essential perfection of man is, that the individual himself is able to acquire a constantly increasing perfection, and is himself responsible for doing so. We all feel that a perfection which is obtained by our own exertions is superior to that which we acquire by means of others. This individual responsibility in its characteristic perfection is what I call *right*.

Suppose that the moral nature of man had no characteristic excellence, no intrinsic value, and that good could be measured only by pleasure; then there would be no right; for how could my pleasure or my pain present any obstacle to the desires of another? The pleasure of one is worth just as much as the pleasure of another: if you enjoy an object, I do not see why I should not enjoy it too. Hence arise inevitable conflicts, and the right of force. If I refrain from appropriating the life, the labor, the honor, the liberty, of my fellow-creatures, if I silence my own appetites, if I lay down my arms before that which is not myself, it is because I have before me an ideal object which restrains my physical power, and places an obstacle before it in my conscience; and this ideal object is the same which I feel within myself, and which enjoins upon me duty toward myself; it is human dignity, the essential perfection of the human being. None of the human goods which I have just enumerated have any value except as they are related to this ideal perfection, to this pure essence, of which they are either the conditions, the elements, or the means of action. For instance, life is the *substratum* even of human personality; material goods are its appendages and auxiliaries; honor, conscience, liberty, are its constituent parts; the family, the country, are its comple-

ment. Just as these are the highest goods for me, so they are the highest goods for others; and my conscience tells me that I ought not to injure them in the case of another any more than in my own.

But just as I might injure another by doing him too much harm, so I might injure him by doing him too much good, or at least by ill-judged benefits. Just here individual responsibility becomes an essential part of right. For example, if, instead of attempting to take the lives of my fellow-creatures, I assume the sole care of supporting their lives; if, instead of depriving them of the fruits of their labor, I find a means for releasing them from all labor; if I make their families my own; if I devote my country, my religion, my will, not to their oppression, but, on the contrary, to making them happy, as I believe — yet in this case, as in the other, by depriving them of all individual effort, of all responsibility, of all proper activity, I shall equally violate the right. A happy slave is more oppressed than a wretched free man: this fact was never comprehended by those who contrasted the happy condition of the negroes in America with the precarious and anxious existence of European workmen. It is the mark of man's superiority that he feels that he is not himself save in a state of independence and freedom, and that it is his right to procure his own happiness.

We see thus that right is the consequence of each man's responsibility to himself: it is the faculty of aiding in working out his own destiny.

It is in this sense that it is perfectly correct to say that human personality is inviolable, that man is an end in himself. We may grant that in this sense duty is based upon right; for it is because man is an end in himself, that duty forbids any attack upon his faculties. But it would be equally correct to say conversely that right is based upon duty, for it is because I am *required* to aid in working out my own destiny that I am an end in myself. In reality, as we have seen, neither of them is based upon the other, but

both rest upon the same foundation — the perfection of the human being, a principle whose essential condition is, that each man shall be responsible for his own destiny.

To carry these investigations farther would be to leave my chosen field. It is enough to have shown how the philosophy of duty is united with the philosophy of right, and how at the same time they are independent of each other.

CHAPTER V.

DIVISION OF DUTIES.

THE question as to the division of duties is ordinarily reserved for practical morality. Philosophers are generally contented with establishing in theoretic morality the *idea* of duty: the question of *duties* is reserved for the second part of the science. Indeed, were this question merely one of classification and a convenient arrangement for the study and exposition of special duties, it might be granted that it is the natural introduction to practical ethics. But the question is of greater importance, and affects the very essence of duty; for the point is to decide what is its domain, how far it extends, whether humanity is its sole object, or whether, on the contrary, the circle of our obligations extends above or below us.

Man may contemplate himself either in relation to himself, or to his fellow-creatures, or to the beings which are inferior to him (animals, and even plants and elements), or to whatever is superior to him — spirits, if he admits their existence — and, finally, to God, the author of all things. Now, the question is, whether man has duties to those above or below him: moreover, if we inscribe the circle of duty strictly within the bounds of humanity, the question remains, whether our duties toward ourselves lead out to our duties toward others, and conversely, or whether these two classes of duties are irreducible. Such is the series of purely theoretical questions raised by the problem of the division of duties.

Kant circumscribes the circle of duties by humanity: he

sets aside all duties toward beings who are either inferior or superior to ourselves. We owe nothing, he says, to beings which have neither duties nor rights in relation to us, as is the case with our inferiors. Neither do we owe any thing toward beings, who, in relation to us, have only rights without duties, as is the case with beings superior to ourselves. To the first class belong animals, which clearly have no duties toward us, and for that very reason have no rights: we know philosophically but one being belonging to the second class, and that one is God. Now, God, or the all-powerful being, has every right over us, but no duty toward us. Hence we owe nothing either to the animals or to God.

Those arguments seem to me utterly inadequate. He says, that, as animals have no rights, we owe no duties to them. But those who say this recognize in general that there are duties which correspond to no rights.[1] For instance, it is our duty to assist our fellow-creatures; yet there are philosophers and publicists who refuse to admit the existence of a right to require assistance. Hence, even if we believe that animals have no rights of any sort, it does not follow that we have no duties toward them. If there is between us and them a certain affinity of nature, a certain sympathy, a sort of fraternity, then we can say that what makes them suffer makes us suffer too, and that we owe them pity, at the least.

Besides, is it true that an animal has no rights? If, as has been already said, right is an ideal power which resists physical force, I recognize such a power in the animal: for if I have the strength to wound and kill him, and yet abstain from doing so without any motive of personal interest, but through sympathy for him, that something which arrests my a[illegible] is also a power; it is the power of an idea. There is, th[illegible] in the nature of the animal, an ideal element which

[1] Kant has nowhere treated specially this question of the correlation of duty and right. But it is clear to any one who has read his *Rechtslehre* and *Tugendlehre* that he does not confound them with each other.

resists my physical power. Why should I not call this a right? Setting aside all theories, I say that a being endowed with feeling has a right not to suffer; that if an animal struck by a rude hand could suddenly acquire speech, he might say to his persecutor; "What have I done to you? Why do you strike me? Why do you treat me as if I were a senseless thing? I am like you; for, like you, I feel, I suffer, and I die." What reply could be made to this? I do not see. Now, the being who could speak thus, and thus defend his right, possesses a virtual right, even although he cannot express it.

In fact, with such an hypothesis, it becomes difficult to explain the right, remorselessly assumed by men, of killing animals for their food, or of subjecting them to their use: indeed, this double right is far from being so clear in theory as its necessity seems to be in practice.

When I see harnessed to our carriages, weighed down by burdens, urged on by the whip, often driven by creatures hardly more intelligent than himself, that noble animal so eloquently described by Buffon, I ask myself whether we really have a right to take from their forests, from their wild life, from their natural associations, so many animals whom courage, suppleness, and goodness seem to render worthy of liberty. Has not the animal, as well as the man, a right to enjoy his faculties without constraint, without control, at his own risk and peril? And though, in spite of these protests of nature, we have not hesitated to subject them, who can see in this any right but that of the strongest? They are not *persons*, do you say? Then they have no rights. Granted; but yet they are not *things*. What! the old horse who carried you in your childhood, the dog who saved your life, these old companions in your hunts, your rides, your battles, they are all *things*, and should be malleable as things! Assuredly not. The jurisconsult is forced to number animals among things—this is always the result of slavery—but in the eyes of the philosopher, an animal, whatever may be said, is

intermediate between a thing and a person; he is the link between one and the other; he is a demi-personality, and has demi-rights.[1]

So far as I can see, the only theoretical justification there is for the dominion which man has assumed over animals, lies in the right of self-defence. If man had left all kinds of animals in perfect freedom, they would have disputed with him the territory of the earth, and would finally have taken possession of every thing. Between him and them there is a struggle for existence. He might, then, have destroyed them: instead of that, when they did not actually threaten his own life, he brought them into subjection, which is for them a lesser evil. The explanation of slavery given by the old jurisconsults (*servus a servando*) may be much more justly applied to animals. We may say, slightly modifying the morality of the good La Fontaine; To serve is better than to die.

As to the right of living upon the flesh of animals, we may say, without being Pythagoreans, that this is far from clear, except from a practical point of view (which leaves in peace the conscience of every one, even of a philosopher): certainly it is not theoretically plain; for we observe that the animals which we use for food are principally herbivorous, or are fish; consequently they do not directly menace our own lives, and their death is not the direct consequence of the right of self-defence. But if they menace us indirectly, as we have just said, by the struggle for subsistence, we have a right to destroy them: as to the use which we make of them after their death, that is of no consequence.[2]

However that may be, it will be seen that the greatest

[1] The Stoics said of man that he was a *demi-slave*, ἡμίδουλος, meaning by this that he is not wholly under the dominion of necessity. To my mind this expression represents very well the condition of the animal. (Œnomaüs ap. Euseb., *Præpar. evang.* v., vi.)

[2] Here I might cite the principle of final causes, as I have done in my *Elements of Moral Science* (chap. xi., § 2); for nature, having made man carnivorous, seems to have destined him to eat flesh, and thus to have justified

difficulty does not lie in proving that we have duties toward animals, but in justifying the rights over them which we have assumed.

As to the lower forms of nature, that is to say, as to things destitute of all feeling and all consciousness, it is clear that there can be no question of morality in regard to them; for as these inorganic things, according to the universal laws of nature, pass through a perpetual circulation and an incessant movement of transformation, no one of their states is any more conformable to nature than any other: and, as we are powerless to act contrary to natural laws, whatever we do, or can do, remains within the order of things, and can have greater or less value only from the stand-point of the necessities of human nature, consequently from its relation to our social duties. At the utmost we can only inquire whether it is permissible needlessly to interrupt the life of living beings — for example, to pluck a flower,[1] or break off a branch. From the stand-point of those who regard the essential principle of morality as being respect for the ends of creation, we should be compelled to say that whatever interrupts life is a sin; and, like the Brahmin, we must refrain from even cutting a blade of grass with our nails.

him beforehand in exercising such a right. But would nature, or even Providence, have a right to release us from obligation to do right? It would then be necessary to prove that the animals have no right in opposition to the use which we make of them, and which is more or less necessary for ourselves.

[1] A great writer has gone so far as to forbid, in eloquent and almost persuasive words, the gathering of bouquets: "You cut me to the heart when you despoil an enamelled field to make a bouquet of anemones of every shade, which will perish in your hands in an instant. No, this gathered flower has no more interest for me. It is a corpse, which has lost its grace, its attitude, its true surroundings. . . . If you love it for its own sake, you will feel that it is the ornament of the soil, and that it is in its true glory when it raises its lovely head from amidst its foliage, or when it bends gracefully over the turf. . . . When you bring it to me broken, crushed, and mutilated, it is no longer a flower: you have destroyed the plant. . . . (Doubtless) study is sacred, and nature must sacrifice some individuals to us; but that is only one reason the more why we should not afterwards profane her by useless massacres." — *Letters of a traveller in regard to Botany, Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 1, 1868.

But this would be carrying out the principle to the extreme point of absurdity and impossibility. Still, we may say in a general way, that such a destructive tendency as that of hordes of barbarians, which, if left uncontrolled, would destroy all life in the universe, is a sort of sin against nature, and is not a matter of absolute unimportance, even if we leave out of consideration human interests.

If we ascend from the beings below us to those which are above us, the only question which arises is, whether we have any duties toward God. For while there may, unquestionably, be an infinite number of creatures between God and man — and there is nothing absurd or impossible in the idea of the existence of beings superior to us — yet we do not know any of these by our experience; and, if revelation commands us to believe that such beings exist, the duties resulting from that belief will belong to what moral theology calls the positive divine law, not to natural law. We may very well believe that men who have died before us attain after their death to a state of sanctity superior to our own, and thereby rise higher in the scale of being: yet they do not cease to be men; and therefore our duties toward the dead, even toward saints, come under the head of our duties to our fellow-creatures. Thus, as I said, there remains only the question of our duties toward God.

Of course, those who do not admit the existence of such a being are justified in saying that we have no duties toward him; for we can owe no duty to that which does not exist. The question is open only to those who admit the existence of God, and who understand by this a being who is not merely infinite, but is also perfect, endowed with all the attributes of Providence. Such a being, says Kant, has only rights, but not duties: now, duty is necessarily reciprocal; to him who owes us nothing, we owe nothing in return.

But how can it be maintained that God has only rights, but no duties, in regard to men, unless we accept the doctrine of Hobbes, that God is merely a power, and that he is

absolute power? In this case, but in this alone, God would have only rights, if we can give that name to what would be merely the unlimited exercise of power. If, on the contrary, God is not merely power, but is also wisdom, justice, and goodness, on what ground can it be affirmed that he has no duties toward his creatures? Unquestionably he does not owe them being, and he has an absolute right to create, or not to create; but, when once the creatures have been produced, he owes them, if not gratuitous happiness, at least a just reward for their efforts: and it would be entirely contrary to the idea of an eternal, necessary, absolute moral law, for God to permit himself to do all sorts of things to his creatures. His divine goodness itself seems to require that evil should not exist for them; and, no matter what reason may be given for it, it will always be true, that gratuitous evil would be unworthy of the divine nature, and that to maintain such a doctrine would be nearly the same thing as to deny the very existence of God. Unquestionably the term duty is unsuitable for expressing a law which the divine nature follows spontaneously, without any constraint; since God can desire only what is good. But while it is superfluous to say of God, that he *owes* any thing, it is not incorrect to say of the creature that something *is due to him.* If the word duty be taken in its narrowest meaning, that is, as a moral *constraint* exerted over a rebellious will, then, in that sense, God has no duty. But, if we understand by it the necessary relations established by the law of good, it is certain that there are such relations between the divine and the human will; and, though the divine will spontaneously conforms to this law instead of obeying it unwillingly, we can draw from this difference no conclusion as to the reciprocal duties of the creature. Since the creature is, hypothetically, the object of divine goodness and justice, there result duties of love, of gratitude, and of respect; for I cannot see that the grandeur of the benefactor can in any way diminish the duties of the one who is benefited.

On the other hand, when it is said that God has no duties toward his creatures, but has only rights, either this latter word means absolutely nothing, and signifies only the demands of force, which in Kant's opinion is inadmissible, or else it means that God can properly require of his creatures whatever he pleases. Now, if this is so (and admitting it would be going back to the theological doctrine of the divine decrees), not only is it incorrect to say that man has no duties toward God, but it is even necessary to declare, that, in relation to God, he has nothing but duties, that every thing is a duty toward him, and that he owes to God whatever may be required of him.

It is also objected, that one can have no duties toward a being to whom one can do neither good nor harm. Now, since God is perfect, and is supremely happy, we can add nothing to his perfection or to his happiness, neither can we take either from him. Hence we are under no obligation toward him. But we must first settle the question whether we have duties only toward those whom we can benefit or injure. Thus, for instance, we have duties of justice, love, and respect, toward the dead, though we can neither benefit nor injure them, since they are dead: and although we may have reasons for thinking that they still live in another form, yet our duties toward them are independent of that consideration; since these duties would still remain, even if we doubted the continued existence of departed spirits, or their being connected in any way with the living. These spirits may be so happy, and in conditions so foreign to our life here below, that they become absolutely indifferent, at least to evil. An historian, for instance, could not justify himself for calumniating heroes by the pretext, that, as he did not believe in the immortality of the soul, he knew perfectly well that he could not injure them. Even in this life a man may, by patient gentleness, raise himself above all injuries, and become absolutely indifferent to them; but that will not make those who injure him innocent. So, too, a man may be

so modest that he does not feel the need of admiration, which does not alter the fact that it is a duty of justice to render him what is due. The inner feelings which we entertain toward other men, and which are not manifested by any act, can neither benefit nor injure their object. Yet no one denies that we have duties of this kind. Thus we see that duty does not depend on the good or evil which may be accomplished without, but on the order of things, which requires that each being should be loved and respected according to his deserts. Now, from this point of view, there is no doubt that God, who is sovereign perfection, and the principle of all order and all justice, is the legitimate object of the highest respect and of the greatest love.

Our duties toward God are, then, clear, if we accept the doctrine of a divine personality. Now, this doctrine is admitted hypothetically when you say, with Kant, that God has rights and no duties; for a purely impersonal being could have neither rights nor duties, and it would be equally incorrect to predicate the first or the last of him. But, in proportion as we recede from this doctrine, we shall see that our obligations toward God seem to grow less and less. It is not certain that we should not owe some supreme duty toward God, even regarding him as the unique and immanent substance of all things. We see Spinoza even vigorously opposing the doctrine of divine personality, and yet making the love of God the ultimate principle of his morality; and this does not seem to be an actual contradiction. We see that the Stoics and the Alexandrians, notwithstanding their pantheism, introduced into their system the duties of piety; and we do not need to inquire what sense they gave to this word, for we know that every religion regards as an impiety every thing outside of its own forms of worship. If, under one form or another, an order of virtues or duties is admitted which have for their object that which is above man, this is enough to make a principle of religion and of piety.

From our stand-point, religion is not the basis of morality;

but it is a part, and the nobler part, of a moral life. In my view, morality does not consist merely in obedience or conformity to an abstract law. This law itself has significance only so far as it commands us to give to our nature all the development of which it is capable; that is to say, to live in the most complete, the fullest, and the noblest, way. Now, the communion of the soul with God — that is, with the Eternal, the Unchangeable, the Perfect — is the noblest thing in man; it is the centre of our whole spiritual life; from it every thing flows out, and to it every thing returns. It is in this sense that the religious life, under one form or another, is one of the necessary elements, and even the noblest one, of moral life.

I have shown, with sufficient clearness, that the circle of moral life is not, in regard to its objects, confined within the bounds of humanity, but that it extends above and below. It remains to be seen what it includes within humanity itself. In this field no one denies our duties toward others, but the duties of man toward himself have been denied.

If there could be any doubt as to the beauty of the moral teaching of Kant and Fichte (not taking into account the purely speculative objections which I have made to their philosophy), it would be enough for its vindication to recall the great importance given by science since their time to the doctrine of our duties toward ourselves. Preceding moralists, excepting the Stoics, had never clearly distinguished the duties of man toward himself from self-interest, properly so called. Kant may be said to be the first moralist who brought out clearly the principle that man owes to himself what he owes to other men, — that is, respect;[1] that he should not assail the dignity of human nature in himself any more than

[1] But, it will be said, then he owes himself happiness, since he owes this to other men? Undoubtedly; and Kant was mistaken when he objected to admitting this consequence. Only, what he owes to himself is true happiness, which is not that of the Utilitarians. It is in the same sense that he owes happiness to other men; for we do not owe them pleasures, but only what is useful for preserving or developing in them human nature.

in other men. Then there re-appeared in moral science those maxims of a noble pride and spiritual dignity which had been banished from it under the name of false pride, and had been replaced by the principles of that doubtful and equivocal virtue which is called humility. Unquestionably Kant's philosophy, like that of the Stoics, recognized the duty of modesty, of simplicity, of a just estimate of one's self; but to these it added the principles of nobility of soul, wrongfully confounded, by a vulgar accusation, with false pride. Who will blame Kant for having restored to moral science these beautiful maxims: "Be not slaves to men. Do not permit your rights to be trampled under foot with impunity. Receive no favors which you can do without. Be neither a parasite, a flatterer, nor a beggar. If one makes himself a worm, can he complain when he is crushed?" and others still. Undoubtedly Christian morality, when properly understood, contains nothing which is directly opposed to these principles.[1] Religious duty has sometimes exalted in a sublime manner the feeling of human dignity, but in daily practice Christianity has rather weakened than fortified this virtue. Undoubtedly, too, so far as concerns the purity which a man owes to himself, and which is a part of the duty of respecting himself, Christian morality requires too much rather than too little.[2] But as to those secular virtues which are called honor, independence, a just pride, the energetic defence of one's rights, — all of this kind of virtues are

[1] We cannot, as M. de Rémusat justly remarked, say that Christianity holds the human soul in low esteem, since it judged it worthy of being redeemed by the blood of Christ. Nevertheless, some of its maxims tend to weaken our personal virtues. M. de Tocqueville also observed, with surprise, that Christianity has given no encouragement to civic virtues. Now, though *public* morals are here concerned, yet it was evidently the fear that the human personality would exalt itself too much which led Christianity to discourage political energy: hence it is because it did not recognize in their entirety the duties of man toward himself, that it also laid little stress on the duties of the public man.

[2] For example, it is asking too much to require us to regard the state of celibacy or virginity as a more perfect state than that of marriage.

generally regarded by Christian moralists as splendid vices, inconsistent with the low estate of a fallen creature.

In whatever way this controversy between the Stoical and the Christian spirit may be settled, one thing is incontestable from any stand-point: and that is, that man does not belong to himself as does a thing to its master; that there is something within him which is not himself, and of which he cannot dispose as if it were his property; and this is humanity, the human essence, man in himself. If this is true, if a man has duties toward himself, then, even were he compelled to live in a desert island, he would not be released from all obligations.

I admit, then, the generally accepted division of duties into four classes. But, having once accepted this classification, a new question arises. Are these four classes of duties irreducible, do they correspond to four kinds of essentially distinct relations, or may they not be resolved, the one into the other, according to the degree of importance belonging to these duties? For instance, may it not be claimed that duties toward animals may be resolved into the duties of man toward himself (for man owes it to himself not to be cruel); that duties toward ourselves may be resolved into duties toward other men (for we ought to respect, and to develop within ourselves, the faculties which are useful to our fellow-creatures); and, finally, that our duties toward other men may be resolved into our duties toward God (for it is God himself, our common father, whom we should love and respect in all)? Accepting this hypothesis, religious morality would absorb social morality, which would, in its turn, absorb that of the individual. On the other hand, could we not reverse the process, resolving religious, and even social, morality into individual morality?

Let us first set aside, as of too little importance for a protracted discussion, the question of our duties toward animals, and while admitting the existence of these duties, as we have shown, let us grant that this part of morals belongs

either to personal morality (man owes it to himself not to be cruel), or to social morality (each of us owes it to other men that we should not needlessly destroy what may be useful to society at large), or to religious morality (man should not needlessly destroy the work of the Creator). Let us reduce the question to these three terms — the individual, society, and God.

The first theory which we encounter is that which classes all our duties as duties toward God. It is the general tendency of the Christian priesthood (setting all theories aside) to regard all duties as belonging to religion: we should do our duty in general because it is the will of God; should do good to other men from love to God; should aid the poor as being members of Christ's body: in a word, the tendency of religious morality is to regard as one sentiment both human and divine charity.

Popular sentiment has justly apprehended the exaggeration and practical insufficiency of the maxim which classes social duties as belonging to religion, saying ironically, that a certain thing is done *for the love of God:* it is well known, that, in common usage, this expression generally indicates a melancholy and grudging act, which confines itself to what is strictly necessary, and reduces the spirit of self-sacrifice to its *minimum.* To give alms for the love of God is not to give: to do one's duty for the love of God is not to do it. Doubtless this is an abuse, which does not properly spring from the principle; and, though a hypocritical piety weakens virtue, we should not attribute the same consequences to true devotion. Still, this irreverent criticism seems to indicate at least the existence of a tendency which is proved by experience; and it is certain that the habit of referring every thing to God may lead the soul away from its legitimate affection for men, render it indifferent to them, and even lead some over-enthusiastic souls to regard those affections as crimes, as robberies of that which is due to God. Thus Pascal came to regard marriage as a *deicide*, and, to avoid

weak compliances, treated his sister with a pious severity. Unquestionably all this is madness, but this folly is the logical result of the principle; for, if we should love men only from love to God, every purely human and secular affection is a robbery of God; and, to destroy within us these profane and carnal affections, we must use violent means, since nature and the flesh are always stronger than our resolutions.

Thus the doctrine of the mystics, which forbids attachment to creatures, and reduces every thing to the love of God, leads logically to a sort of pious egotism, and even to cruelty; and these extravagant consequences are to be feared in proportion as the principle is exaggerated. Unquestionably, it is very true and very beautiful to say with the Christians, that the souls of our fellow-creatures are the temples of God; with the Stoics, that there is a God within man. Thus we exalt human nature: thus, too, we lift up the weak and the lowly, the poor and the miserable, and teach the great ones of the earth that they are all of the same stock. And of what stock? One that is divine. These noble words have consoled many suffering souls, and humbled many that were fierce and insolent. But while it is correct to say, not only with the Christians and the Stoics, but also with the Platonists, that all creatures derive their essence and their being from God alone, that whatever true and real thing there is in them is due to their participation in God, yet it must also be admitted that the creature has its own being, its own activity, a personality which cannot be confounded with that of the Creator, and that for this reason it is itself an object for love and respect; that we should neither lose ourselves in the bosom of divinity in a sort of mental suicide, which is called ecstasy, nor destroy within ourselves, in a stern and ascetic devotion, all human affections.

Neither can I agree any better with the second theory, which makes our duties to ourselves subordinate to our

duties to others. But this doctrine is held in two forms. Either the existence of any duties toward one's self is utterly denied, and duties of that kind are explained as being only special forms of our duty to others, which view I have just refuted;[1] or else the existence of such duties is admitted, but they are made subordinate to others, being regarded as *relative*, while our duties toward others are called *absolute*.[2]

It is surprising that Fichte, the philosopher of liberty, of personality, he who declared the basis of morality to be the obligation of being one's self (*die Selbstständigkeit, die Persönlichkeit*), could yet consider our duties toward ourselves as conditional, and subordinate to our duties toward others. Fichte's reason is of very nearly the same kind with that which makes Malebranche sacrifice all our duties to those of religion. With the latter, God is the universal, the sole efficient cause, therefore the only true and substantial principle, so that whatever there is in the creatures that is real, solid, and estimable comes from God only; similarly, with Fichte all the substantial reality of the individual comes to him from humanity in general, from his participation in the human essence abstractly considered. That which he calls the Ego is not the individual Ego, circumscribed and determined by time and space. It is the human Ego — the conscience, the personality; that is to say, it is what is common to all men and identical in all. Thus it is to humanity in general, not to my own individuality, that I owe something. The duties of the individual toward himself are therefore only conditional and relative to the absolute duty which has for its object humanity in general.

But it is plain, that, in speaking of duties toward one's self,

[1] See p. 232.

[2] This distinction is made by Fichte in his philosophy. He considers duties toward one's self as mediate, conditional duties — *mittelbare, bedingte* Pflichten — and duties toward others as immediate and unconditional — *unmittelbare, unbedingte* Pflichten. — *System der Sittenlehre*, pp. 254-259, Fichte's Werke, Bonn, 1834.

no one means to speak of duties toward the individual regarded as such. We do not mean the duties of Peter toward Peter regarded as Peter, but toward the individual regarded as a man, so far as he contains and expresses humanity in general. Undoubtedly we may admit that there are certain duties toward the individual, properly so called: the duties of Cato are not the same as those of Cicero. From this point of view individual duties differ,[1] while personal duties are the same with every one. Every one ought to be temperate, brave, prudent, etc.: and what we call duties toward ourselves are our duties toward that part of ourselves which is not individual, and which is the cause of our dignity and our personality; that is, our reason, liberty and self-consciousness. It does not follow from this that our duties toward ourselves may be classed as duties toward other men: for other men, regarded as individuals, are no more the direct objects of duty than we ourselves; they are so only in so far as they are men, and from the same stand-point, and for the same reasons, that we ourselves are such objects. Hence we must first be an object of duty to ourselves before we can comprehend that others are equally so. Humanity considered as a *body*, must be distinguished from humanity considered as an *idea*. Entire humanity, considered as an idea, exists within each one of us: it is what constitutes human personality. I am a man without any reference to my relations to the *body* of humanity. If I consider myself afterwards as a part of that body, in relation to the other members who form it together with me, then new duties result; but these do not take supremacy over the others, nor absorb them; they are as sacred as the others, but not more so. It could only be from the stand-point of

[1] In regard to this, Cicero said that it was the duty of Cato to kill himself, but that it would not have been the duty of any other man. This may, perhaps, be questionable; but it is certain that individuality does count for something in morality. Schleiermacher, in his *Ethics*, has strongly advocated this view.

a sort of humanitarian pantheism that one could sacrifice personal to social duties, just as it is only from the stand-point of a mystical pantheism that one can sacrifice both to religious duties.

If it were absolutely necessary to reduce all classes of duties to one only, the only rational reduction would be that which classes all as duties toward one's self. We have already seen that the fundamental principle of morals is to exalt the human personality within us to the highest point of excellence of which it is capable. We have in reality no other duty to perform than that of fulfilling the ideal of humanity as completely as possible within ourselves. From this stand-point all duties, even the most exalted, are so only because they enter into the ideal of the perfect man, toward which all our actions should tend. Thus, as we have already shown, if religious or social virtue did not enter into the ideal of our own good (not of our good as individuals, but of our good as men), these virtues, being absolutely foreign to us, and nowhere coming into contact with us, could not be obligatory upon us; for I can be under no obligation to that which does not concern me. But, since the ideas of religion and of society form an essential part of human nature, I cannot be entirely a man — that is, I cannot fulfil my whole destiny — nor can I accomplish all the good of which I am capable, if I neglect the actions which accompany those two sentiments. Hence all my duties may be ultimately resolved into that of perfecting myself.

Yet it would show a very defective comprehension of this principle, and would lead us into a sort of individualistic egotism as erroneous as the mysticism of Malebranche and the socialism of Fichte, if we were to confound absolutely these three classes of duties, and resolve the two latter into the first. The truth is, that the principle which I have already enunciated includes all these, while they, nevertheless, remain distinct and irreducible.

In fact, as I have shown in the first part of this work, it

would be acting exactly contrary to the idea of our duties toward humanity, were we to consider other men merely as *means* for producing our own perfection, just as mystics end by seeing in other men merely their own means of salvation; so that they would almost be displeased if there were no more sufferers on the earth, since then they would have no way in which to exercise charity. While charity, having for its end only the interests of humanity, tends essentially to the destruction of evil, false mysticism and false piety would be tempted to make it eternal for the sake of charity. Individualism, incorrectly understood, might lead to similar results; for, if we should see in our relations to men only a means of promoting our own moral growth, we might desire evil solely that we might have the glory and merit of sacrificing ourselves (as a general desires war, so that he may fall with glory). Moreover, just as the false devotee loves men only for the love of God, which is, in one sense, equivalent to not loving them at all, so the individualist would love men only for the sake of giving himself the satisfaction of loving them. For instance, has it not often happened in politics, that people have adopted the most humanitarian doctrines simply that they might enjoy egotistically the feeling that they had ideas more beautiful and noble than those of their adversaries? Finally, if one does good for the sake of acquiring merit, does he not fall into the sin of pride, for which the Stoics have been so frequently blamed? Thus apprehended, all virtues would indeed be what St. Augustine called them, splendid vices, *vitia splendida*. But we have seen that the principle of personal excellence does not logically involve these results, since devotion to other men without thought of one's self forms part of the ideal of human excellence. The true idea of the perfect man implies that we should love and respect men for their sakes, not for our own. We ought even, in certain cases, to sacrifice our own moral merit to the good of others. For example, if we can be more useful to a man by making him a loan than by

making him a gift, we ought to prefer loaning to giving, although the gift, since it involves more sacrifice of our own interests, is for that very reason more meritorious. We ought to love our children and our friends because they are our children and our friends, not because it is a fine thing to love them.

In a word, it is quite true that the basis of all our duties is the principle of personal excellence; and, in a general way, we may say that all duties may be traced back to the duties of the person toward himself. But, at the same time, the excellence of human nature is determined by the necessary relations in which that nature is placed, and by the different elements of the spiritual life of man. Now, man sustains three distinct and irreducible relations — to himself, even were there no other individual in the world; to other men; and to God. Hence originate three elements in the spiritual life of man — the personal, the social, and the religious, life. In order that human perfection may be complete, it is necessary that these three modes of life should have complete development, without being sacrificed one to another. Thus within the unity of the principle exists the triple division which is generally accepted.

CHAPTER VI.

CONFLICT OF DUTIES.

WE now come to one of the most difficult problems in morals, and it is probably on account of this difficulty that most moralists have neglected it. If you open all the great treatises on morals, both ancient and modern, you will hardly find anywhere a discussion of the problem of which I speak.[1] Philosophers have left this question to the theologians. These have made of it a special science — that of *cases of conscience*, or casuistry — which has fallen into great discredit among worldly people (always very critical of those who preach to them), on account of the reputation for laxity given to those who have devoted themselves to this science. It was, indeed, natural, that in examining with such subtlety, and in such an abstract way, arbitrary and perplexing hypotheses, the moral sense should sometimes become blunted, and should grow a little too accommodating. It is true, also, that the casuists discussed too fully (much more than was at all necessary) certain immodest topics, which refined morals do not even mention.[2] Hence casuistry fell into a discredit,

[1] I must except, among the ancients, Cicero, in his *De Officiis*, B. iii. The Stoics paid much attention to casuistry. Among the moderns, Wolf, in his *Philosophia Practica Universalis*, §§ 210, 211, endeavored to give some rules for cases in which there is collision between duties; but they are very unsatisfactory. For instance, the following:

Article 1, c. 2, § 210. *Si lex præceptiva et prohibitiva colliduntur, prohibitiva vincit.* § 2. *Si lex præceptiva et prohibitiva cum permissiva colliduntur, permissiva cedit*, etc.

[2] The argument drawn from the necessities of the confessional is very weak, for it is utterly useless for the confessor to be instructed beforehand as to all the disgraceful combinations which the sensual appetites can invent;

justified to a certain extent by the abuse which had been made of it, but which is, nevertheless, inconvenient on some accounts, as it removes from practical morals all difficulties, leaving only such things as are clear, and hardly require discussion. Kant, however, who, with his rare insight, never disregarded any useful idea, introduced into his *Metaphysics of Ethics* some questions in casuistry; but he merely presented them as problems, without giving any rules for their solution.

An eminent moralist[1] has said that moral science has nothing to do with casuistry, and that the conscience must decide in each special case. But, if we were to apply this rule strictly, we should condemn, not merely casuistry, but the whole science of practical morals; for every question of morality is ultimately a case of conscience. The discussion of suicide, of duelling, of homicide for self-defence — all these, and a thousand other questions, are questions in casuistry. Undoubtedly it is the conscience which must be the ultimate judge. At the moment of the act, there is rarely time in which to appeal to casuistry; yet even at this last moment the conscience is frequently undecided, and is forced to consider the *pros* and *cons* as a casuist would do.[2] But, in order that it may decide with clearness and authority, should it not have been previously enlightened, and prepared to judge, by a general and theoretical discussion, and by a critical comparison between different duties? Imagine yourself in India, where you encounter that barbarous prejudice which forces women to die on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Would you think it enough to appeal to the consciences of the people? Conscience here demands obedience to a prejudice. You would be obliged to combat the prejudice

and he must be credited with a very poor sort of conscience if it is thought, that, when one of these cases comes before him, he will not be able to judge for himself what degree of immorality it implies.

[1] J. Simon, *Le Devoir*.

[2] Victor Hugo has, in *Les Misérables*, described with great vigor and insight an interesting case of conscience. (See the chapter, A Tempest in a Brain.)

itself; but with what weapons? By reasoning; that is to say, by a casuistic discussion. The whole moral progress of society has been merely the progressive solutions of different cases of conscience, brought about little by little by the progress of reason and the development of human relations. This is true of the abolition of slavery, of human sacrifices, of the *auto-da-fé*, of the right of primogeniture, etc. What are we discussing to-day? The right of inflicting the death-penalty, divorce, compulsory education, the general obligation to military duty, the right of insurrection, etc. Each of these is a case of conscience.

Unquestionably there is one side of theological casuistry which we have no occasion whatever to consider here; because it is a case of practical medicine, or, rather, of a code. It is the code of the confessor, who, since it is his duty to absolve or to condemn, must necessarily have a balance in which to weigh with accuracy the guilt of the guilty. Hence comes a complete theory as to aggravating or extenuating circumstances, which has reference rather to the responsibility of the agent than to the nature of his obligations. Legal tribunals, as well as those of the conscience, recognize that the agent may be more or less guilty according to circumstances. But this is a very different question from that of conflicting duties. However severe a principle may be, yet, so long as it is combated only by personal interests or by natural inclinations, we may always say, *Dura lex, sed lex.* The judge may, if he thinks proper, compassionate the weakness of nature; but the moralist is forbidden to sacrifice the law to any such considerations. Strictly speaking, these are not cases of conscience. The real difficulty is, to decide *à priori* what should be done in view of two conflicting duties; which should be sacrificed when both cannot be fulfilled. For this we need a rule which no moralist supplies. The novelty and difficulty of the question must be my apology for the meagreness of what I offer. I shall merely indicate what may be afterwards perfected by others.

Let us first establish two principles which will amply suffice for the solution of a great many cases.

First; Among duties of the same class, we may take for a rule that the relative importance of the duties depends upon the importance of their objects, and in case of conflict the best object should be chosen.

Second; As between different classes of duties (other things being equal), the importance of the duty depends on the extent of the group to which it applies. Hence comes that saying of Fénelon's; "I owe more to humanity than to my country, to my country than to my family, to my family than to my friends, to my friends than to myself."

Let us first inquire into the application of these two principles.

First Rule. — We have seen that every human action has the effect of augmenting or of diminishing the sum of activity, or of being, of one or of several creatures (for instance, of myself). Whatever augments my being is a good. Whatever diminishes it is an evil. But the different goods (or augmentations of being) do not always have the same importance or the same excellence, as we have already seen. For instance, if I procure for a child a slight pleasure which lasts a moment, this minimum good (the reality of which cannot be denied) is very far from equalling the good which I do him when I enlighten his mind or strengthen his will. Thus, in proportion as I advance in self-knowledge, or in the comprehension of human nature, I can make a more and more exact estimate of the goods which are possible for it, and can establish a comparative scale for them all. If I can procure all these different goods for myself at the same time, all is right: in that case there will be no conflict. But too often it happens that I cannot procure one without sacrificing others for it: then begins the conflict, and the application of the rule which I have given.

For example, there is no doubt that life is a good. It is so in the first place for its own sake, for the life of a man

is far superior to that of the brute. It is so also as the condition of personality and morality.[1] Thus it has value both of form and of substance. Hence it follows, that to preserve it is a duty. Thence arises the question, what one ought to do when this duty conflicts with another duty of the same class. For instance, the alternative is placed before me whether I will betray the truth, will be false to my convictions and my faith, or whether I will give up my life. This is the case presented to the martyrs, which the human conscience decides naturally and unanimously, not only by accepting, but by imposing, the precept, that one ought to sacrifice life rather than honor, and to die rather than apostatize.[2] The reason for this is, that life or existence is of less value than the power of thinking or believing. By the latter we belong to the intellectual world, by the former to the world of sense. If it is said that life has two elements, one physical, the other intellectual and spiritual (that is, the soul), and that in sacrificing one, the physical life, I may perhaps sacrifice the other, the moral, I reply: either this second element, the soul, is by its nature eternal and imperishable, consequently it cannot be suppressed, even by my will; or else it is perishable, and consequently is of less value than the truth, which is unquestionably eternal and absolute. But, it is said, truth cannot be harmed by your weakness: it is immutable and inviolable from its very nature. Moreover, no one can deprive you of the truth: your conscience and your interior liberty are inviolable. Hence you sacrifice merely its exterior expression; but this expression cannot be of greater value than life, since you do not know but that, in losing this existence, you lose thereby even the truth to which you sacrifice it.

[1] Fichte (on suicide) remarks that we might say of life what Kant said of existence, that it is not a *predicate*, but is *the necessary condition for all predicates*. But life is not merely a condition, it is a determination of existence, for there are things which do not live.

[2] Here I do not take into consideration duty toward God or toward men, but speak only of what one owes to himself.

This sophistry may be answered in the following way. The man toward whom I have duties is the entire man, soul and body. I ought not only to keep my soul pure, letting the body follow its own laws, but I ought to make an incorporeal use of my body. For example, the body serves as the organ of thought, and the law of thought is truth: then I owe it to myself, that I should be entirely (soul and body) the organ and the instrument of truth. But, when I sacrifice truth to life, I sacrifice to my physical preservation the right which the soul possesses of making the body its instrument. That which gives the soul its dignity is this very power of transforming the body into an instrument of truth, and, as Kant expresses it, intellectualizing the sensitive world. By sacrificing this right and this power to the pleasure of living, I on the contrary, so far as lies in my power, reduce the intellectual element to that which is sensitive. The soul which continues to exist under these conditions really deserves no longer the name of soul, since it has sacrificed to life every thing that gives life its value: —

"*Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.*"

Let us take a more difficult case. Suppose the soul is forced to choose between conscience and chastity. This is the case with the virgin Theodora in Corneille's tragedy: either she must betray her faith or she must lose her honor and her virginity. Here we have in question two goods, each of which is preferable to life,[1] since each contributes both to the purity and the dignity of the soul. It will not do to say that to submit to violence without consenting to it, is not to participate in the sin; for you might equally well say, that to deny one's faith under constraint is no true consent nor true apostasy: and if you say, that, in the second

[1] Here arises another question. Should the duty of preserving chastity be more regarded than the duty of preserving life? Yes, for the preceding reasons. Humanly speaking, it is excusable to yield to violence through fear of death; but the duty of not surrendering one's self except on certain conditions is superior to the duty of living.

case, there would be consent, because I might avoid this alternative by choosing the other, then it should be said conversely of the other alternative, which might be escaped by choosing the first. Clearly, the difficulty can be solved only by saying that virginity is of less value than sincerity, which is plain; for, if we change the conditions (as, for example, in the state of marriage), the loss of virginity is a perfectly innocent and legitimate fact, wholly conformed to the laws of nature: while treason to one's faith and conscience is always criminal. This view is also justified by the general opinion of mankind, which more readily pardons the weaknesses of the senses than the cowardice of apostasy and hypocrisy.

But if it may be legitimate, and even obligatory, in a given case, to sacrifice modesty to truth, it will not be so to sacrifice it to self-love or to reputation; for this would be to prefer external, to true, honor. For example, it would not be permissible to steal in order to escape the accusation of stealing, even if one should attempt to repair one's fault by suicide. It should be the same in regard to chastity. These are the two errors which we find in the history of Lucretia.[1] She was mistaken when she preferred an actual (though constrained) violation of conjugal fidelity to unmerited disgrace. It would be very harsh to say that Lucretia was an adulteress, but it would be difficult to say that she was not one. St. Augustine himself, who condemns the suicide, seems not to have condemned the adultery. But she might have escaped it by accepting the alternative which Sextus offered her; that is, death and exterior disgrace. Thus she was doubly mistaken — first in consenting, then in killing herself. Here the solution of the difficulty is, that external

[1] The action of Lucretia is, nevertheless, *subjectively* noble; that is to say, from the stand-point of her ideas and of her time, and as an energetic expression of the dignity of the conjugal bond. But here I am speaking of the action abstractly considered. Lucretia's act was widely discussed among the ancients. "A wonderful thing!" said a rhetorician: "they were two, yet only one was adulterous." St. Augustine agrees with this.

honor, reputation, is an extrinsic fact which does not belong in any way to the person; while consent, even if constrained, even if involuntary, and accompanied by shame and regret, is an act of the person. Interior purity and actual fidelity are, then, a greater good.

A still more difficult case than either of the preceding arises when we have to choose between two goods which are apparently equal, or, what is still more perplexing, when the same good is considered from two different stand-points. For instance, suppose I cannot express my thoughts freely — that is to say, cannot disseminate among men what I believe to be the truth — unless I employ certain subterfuges which make me seem to believe what I do not believe. This was the case with sceptics in preceding centuries. They could express their thoughts only on condition of denying them to a certain extent. Here, it will be seen, the duty of telling the truth contradicts itself. If I employ the accepted subterfuges, I betray the cause of truth; but, if I keep silent, then also I betray it; and silence is itself a sort of subterfuge. Thus truth seems to be opposed to itself.

Doubtless it will be said that the duty of expressing one's entire thought is an indefinite duty, while the duty of saying nothing contrary to one's thought is a definite duty, and that it is therefore one's duty not to speak when he cannot do so without doing violence to the truth. But we have seen how artificial and fragile is the theory which divides duties into these two classes. Moreover, this would be answering the question by the question itself; for the problem is, to decide which of the two duties is *imperative*, and which is *optional* — in other words, which one ought to be sacrificed to the other. Here we seem not to have one good to compare with another, since the good in each case is the same.

But, if we consider the matter more closely, we shall see, that, in reality, we are not comparing one and the same good with itself. There is, indeed, no likeness between falsehood and silence. By my silence I resign myself to not augment-

ing the sum of truth (or what I believe to be such) among men. By a lie, on the contrary, I tend to destroy the sum of verity which already exists, and therefore future verity also; so that I destroy my own work. For, if I deceive by my subterfuges, how can it be proved that I may not be deceiving in every thing, and all the world is not deceiving with me? The first and essential condition of laboring for the progress of truth is, not to destroy confidence in the truth. Now, he who keeps silence (through necessity) contents himself with making no change in the state of things: he does not destroy the possibility of a better state. But he who deceives, even in the interest of truth, thereby imperils the very principle which he professes to endeavor to save.

A conflict arises between the duties of feeling and the duties of intelligence in the shape of the question of vivisection, so much discussed in these days. I owe it to myself to cultivate and develop science if I am a scientist. On the other hand, I owe it to myself, so far as I am a man, that I should sympathize with every thing that suffers, and that at least I should not cause needless suffering. Cruelty, and indifference to suffering, are certainly a low state of mind; for by them man draws near to the level of the brutes. What, then, shall be done? Should science be sacrificed to pity, or pity to science? Doubtless the question is more complex than it appears as presented here; for we must also consider what we owe to humanity, and what we owe to the animals. But considering the problem merely as I have stated it — that is to say, as a conflict between two personal duties — I remark first, that genuine cruelty implies the idea of maltreating for the sake of injuring, and even that of finding a certain pleasure in the sufferings of others. The fact of causing pain is not always cruelty, as is shown by surgical operations. These, indeed, have for their object the good of the patient, which cannot be said of vivisections. But, in this case, the naturalist may, at least, say that the object in view is not the suffering of the animal; that he does not

torture him simply to cause him suffering, but even alleviates his sufferings whenever he can, and so far as he can. Yet this reply is far from being satisfactory; for though it is the highest degree of cruelty or vengeance to enjoy the sufferings of another, yet it is an equally certain, though less degree, to be indifferent to them. He who goes straight on to his purpose (like a Robespierre or a Saint-Just), without caring for the sufferings of men, is a cruel man, even if he takes no pleasure in those sufferings. Thus it is not necessary to impute to the physiologist the absurd and monstrous cruelty of enjoying the sufferings of animals; but it seems as though indifference itself were a drying-up of the soul, a weakening of its sympathetic faculties, and therefore, that, while the man is growing greater in one direction, he is growing less in another. This difficulty might be settled by saying, with Spinoza, that pity is an evil; but it is difficult to admit this. Or, again, it might be said that pity, and the feelings in general, are of an order inferior to the intellect, which may be true, but only in the sense that pity should be guided by intelligence, not sacrificed to it. To guide the feelings by the reason is not to destroy the feelings for the benefit of the reason. It seems, then, that it would be impossible to solve the problem proposed if we confine ourselves to the preceding point of view. Or, rather, the only possible answer would be, that any voluntary cruelty, even if useful, even if exercised toward inferior beings, is illegitimate, excepting in case of self-defence. But if we consider the interests of humanity, which are here bound up with the interests of science, the question presents a new aspect; and the right to perform vivisections becomes only a special form of the general right which nature gives us to use animals for our benefit, while sparing them all useless suffering.

Second Rule. — According to this rule, the importance of a duty depends on the extent of the group to which it applies.

Here we have first the self-evident principle that a good is greater and more excellent — other things being equal — when the number of individuals who enjoy it is greater. For example, the happiness of a whole family is worth more than that of an individual; that of all the families in a state than that of a single one; and that of all nations than that of one only. In general, whenever the happiness of several does not diminish the happiness of one, but is consonant with it, it is evidently to be preferred.

Thus, when the good of one is consonant with the good of several or of all, there is no difficulty. The conflict actually arises, only when the good of a great number cannot be obtained without some sacrifice of individual good. The moral agent is then called upon to decide between his own good and that of the community. Here the principle is, that the greatest good is that of the largest community, and that the goods of the different groups may be estimated by the extent of each. But it must not be forgotten, that, to make this principle applicable, we must compare the same goods, or the same kind of goods, which was implied in saying, *every thing else being equal.*

However, even in this case, the rule is not absolutely true without restriction: it must at least be specially interpreted. If, for example, we admit unreservedly that the good of the individual ought to be sacrificed to the good of the whole, would it not follow that the life of one alone might be sacrificed for the preservation of all, that the liberty of one or of a few might be sacrificed to preserve the liberty of all, that the fortune and the good of individuals might be sacrificed or absorbed for the benefit of the community? The gravest errors of what is called socialism, and some of the worst excesses of despotism, might be justified by the rule that the good of a few can, and should, be subordinated to the good of all. Yet, in another sense, if this rule were not admitted, it would follow that one would have a right to prefer his country to humanity, his family to his country, and himself to all the rest.

The maxim of Fénelon is perfectly right, but it should not be wrongly understood. When we say that one ought to prefer the good of the larger groups to that of the smaller, it must always be understood that we are speaking of goods which are personal, and which I may, to a certain extent, control. For example, I have a right to subordinate *my* good to that of *my* family, for in one sense I am responsible for both. But it must not therefore be concluded that I have a right to sacrifice the good of another individual to that of my family, under the pretext that a family is worth more than an individual. Neither have I the right to sacrifice another family to mine, under the pretext that mine is the more numerous, and that the good of the greater number should be preferred. It is not, then, the good of some individual in general, or of some family in general, that I ought to subordinate to the good of my family or to the good of my country. It is my own good which I should sacrifice to that of my family: it is the good of my family which I should subordinate to that of my country. As to the good of other individuals or other families, I have no right to dispose of that except in the cases determined by law. Thus the principles enunciated imply no consequences which need be feared, and should not be understood in the sense of that famous adage, *Salus populi suprema lex.* On the contrary, they condemn it. What is meant by saying that the good of one's country should be subordinated to that of humanity? It is meant that our duties toward man in general are of a higher order than our duties toward the state, and that the former ought not to be sacrificed to the latter, etc. The execution of an innocent man is the violation of a duty toward humanity; the confiscation of property is a violation of duty toward property; in a word, every act of injustice is the violation of a general duty which is superior to the more special duties which are due to the country or the state. The celebrated phrase: "Let the colonies perish, rather than a principle!" may have seemed a rhetorical exaggeration;

but it was, nevertheless, correct in principle: for no institution which is based, hypothetically, only upon injustice, has any right to exist.

But it is one thing not to disregard justice or humanity in the interest of my country or of my family, and another thing to sacrifice my family to my country, my country to humanity.

For instance, should I, like Brutus and Torquatus, put my own son to death in order to save the state? Are these great examples of fiery patriotism binding upon Christian nations? would they not be revolting to us? Yes, doubtless: the modern conscience has become more delicate, and it orders or permits the individual to avoid these repulsive conflicts between the heart and the demands of the state. Thus it would not permit Brutus himself to condemn his son to death. it would show indulgence to young Torquatus, because military discipline no longer wears the sacred character which it bore among the Romans. But, in spite of the modern delicacy of a conscience enlightened and softened by Christianity, it is still true that the family should be lost sight of in the state. In certain cases this would indeed be a very difficult act of heroism; but a thing which is difficult, and requires more than ordinary strength, is none the less a duty.

But if the human conscience is accustomed to admire, and command in extreme cases, the sacrifice of one's family to one's country, it does not equally well grasp the idea of the sacrifice of one's country to humanity. Imagine the impossible case that an emperor of Russia should come to comprehend the injustice and monstrosity of the oppression of Poland, and that, under the influence of his conscientious scruples, he should consent to restore to ancient Poland her independence and liberty. Undoubtedly this conduct would be in strict conformity with duty, yet it is highly probable that Russian patriots would regard such an act as treasonable. The case is similar when a country is drawn into an

unjust war. People are tempted to regard as traitors all those who say that the war is unjust, and who speak against it. Yet it is a manifest duty to prefer justice to one's country. But, it will be said, if this is true, one would have a right, not merely to refuse to take part in an unjust war, but even to bear arms in favor of the oppressed against one's own country. For instance, those who regarded the wars of the empire with Europe as unjust, would have had a right, as Moreau believed that they had, to bear arms against their own country. This consequence is not involved in the principle. In truth, the right of criticising an unjust war cannot go so far as to give the right of co-operating with the enemies of one's country, although it might extend to the right of refusing to co-operate with such injustice. Every soldier who is not bound by legal obligations (which preclude the right of examination) may and should refuse to fight in behalf of a notoriously unjust cause, such, for instance, as a war for the re-establishment of slavery, or, to take a case not hypothetical, the odious war by which England forced the opium-trade upon China. The reason why this duty is far from being binding is, that it is very difficult to determine just how far a war is just or unjust. Moreover, there is another principle, the preserver and guaranty of the liberty of the people, that the army ought not to discuss the orders which it executes. Indeed, an army which discusses is an army which decides: an army which decides is an army which commands, which governs, and which makes the laws. But it is, nevertheless, true, that no man is individually obliged to assist in an act which is notoriously barbarous or unjust: but then it would be his duty to retire from military to civil life, and, while renouncing his duties, renounce also his rights; for the two cannot be separated.

Thus far we have taken for illustration only comparatively simple cases: the first, concerning goods of unequal value belonging to the same group of duties, when the rule is that the greater should be preferred to the less; the

second, concerning one and the same kind of good affecting groups of unequal extent, and for these we have accepted the principle that the good of the larger group should be preferred to that of the smaller.

But a third and more complicated case may arise when we have on the one hand a more excellent good, and on the other a more extensive group. For instance, on one side, my honor; on the other, the security of my family or of my country. Here the conflict does not arise from a comparison of goods, neither does it come from a comparison of groups: it arises from the opposition of goods and groups to each other. As an individual I ought to prefer the more excellent goods to those which are inferior: as a member of the human race I ought to prefer general to individual good — the existence of society or of the family to my own existence, public or domestic prosperity to my own individual prosperity, the liberty of all to that of myself. In a word, when homogeneous goods are in question, the good of all is always more desirable than private good; but, if my own good is of a superior order, will it then be unrestrictedly true that I ought to prefer the good of others to my own good? Here a new rule becomes necessary.

Third Rule. — When the *order of goods* comes in conflict with the *order of duties*, the latter should be subordinated to the former.

By the *order of goods*, I mean the scale of goods according to which we measure them and assign to them different values. Thus the goods of the soul are superior to the goods of the body, and the goods of the body to exterior goods. By the *order of duties* I mean the scale of duties so far as they relate to groups of greater or less extent — the individual, the family, the country, humanity.

Now, when the two orders clash, I say that the order of goods should be regarded, rather than the order of duties; in other words, that the duties to one's self are more binding than those toward others.

Remember that we are not now comparing heterogeneous goods; that is, a good which is greater, and one which is less. In this case, and in this alone, we should take into consideration the intrinsic value of the good, not the greater or less extent of the group. For instance, I ought to pay less regard to my own happiness than to that of my family, to my life than to theirs, etc.; but I ought not to regard my honor less than their pleasure, my conscience less than their tranquillity. I ought not to lie, for instance, in order to promote their prosperity; for to lie is to assail the dignity and the excellence of my intelligence, which is of an order superior to that of the happiness of the senses, or simple corporeal well-being.

Hence the family has no right to require that its head should become a flatterer, intriguer, or rapacious person, in order to maintain it. So, too, duty toward other men should never be carried to such an extent as to make us sacrifice to them our honor or our dignity. If this be true, it is said, then police and war must be impossible; for each has absolute need of spies, and espionage is generally regarded as a base and humiliating occupation. I reply, that to be a spy, so far as this is accompanied by treason, is, in truth, unworthy of any honorable conscience; but, if it is merely a bold and dangerous investigation of the projects of the enemy, it involves nothing contrary to the laws of honor. It is admitted that an officer who makes a reconnoissance at the head of his men, does nothing contrary to the laws of war. If he does it alone, approaching the enemy more closely, or even entering within his lines, does his action become more blameworthy in becoming more perilous? Evidently not. Following out this idea, we shall see that no espionage is shameful except that which is accompanied by perfidy and treachery; for example, that of one who feigns friendship that he may more easily betray, or of the traitor who passes himself off as thief that he may better help to catch the thieves. It is this sort of espionage which is

shameful, though it may be useful and even necessary. But, while it may be necessary to make use of human vices, they are none the less vices; and no one can be authorized to practise vices because they may be serviceable to the state. It is but rarely, moreover, that any cases actually arise in which there is any real conflict between the conscience of the individual and the duties of the citizen. A politician passes from one party into another under the pretext that his duty is to his whole country. But the country is in much greater need of men who are faithful to their opinions and their principles than it can be of public functionaries: this is not a case of conflict. A weak country makes itself the vassal of a more powerful country in the fear that it may be absorbed into it, but this is to avoid the evil by anticipating it in effect. In such a case, dignity is also the best policy. A politician breaks an oath under the pretext of saving the state; but it is doubtful whether he will save the state, and it is certain that he will dishonor himself by his perjury. It will be seen, that, in the greater part of similar cases, the good is uncertain and the evil is incontestable. The conflict may, then, be avoided easily, at least in theory: practically the choice frequently involves great sacrifices. However this may be, whenever there is any real conflict, the principle of honor and of personal dignity should be respected more highly than the principle of the interest of the greatest number.

I am far from thinking that the preceding remarks exhaust the subject of which I am treating. I have attempted merely to place some landmarks upon a road which, if not entirely new, has at least been forsaken by secular moralists. The subject would require a whole volume.[1] I content myself with a preface only.

[1] In the third part (chaps. i., ii., and iii.), I shall return to the question of moral conflicts, but shall regard it from another point of view.

BOOK THIRD.

MORALITY, OR THE MORAL AGENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

MORAL science generally concerns itself only with the law in itself, with what may be called the *objective* law, such as it would appear in itself to a reason absolutely capable of understanding it in its entirety. It has paid rather too little attention to *subjective* morality; that is to say, to the law considering it as judged, known, interpreted, and applied by the moral agent. It has abandoned to theological ethics the study of this kind of questions, and the latter has examined them principally from a practical point of view.

Yet there is here a philosophical problem of extreme difficulty. I am told that the moral law is absolutely obligatory. But what moral law is here spoken of? Is it that which exists in itself, independently of myself, of my knowledge, of my personal judgment? Or is it the moral law as it is known and understood by me? In the former case, by what sign can I recognize this law? Where is it? How can I discover it, if it is not in my own conscience? If this is not the law itself, I can obey only in so far as I know the law; and I can know it only by my own thought, my own judgment. In the second case, if I take my own conscience for judge, how can I be sure that I am really obeying the law itself, and not a law of my own invention, a fiction of my own mind? In a word, it seems as though any law to be obligatory must be *objective* — that is to say, independent of individual modes of thought and feeling; while, on the other hand, the law necessarily becomes *subjective*, so far as it is known and followed by an individual agent. Thus I can

never be sure that I am obeying the true, absolute law, which alone, however, seems to have a right to command my obedience.

A great German philosopher, Fichte, saw the full difficulty of this problem (which Kant himself had overlooked); and he solved it boldly. "The formal law of morals," he said, "is this: Always act in conformity with your convictions of duty (in other words, always obey your conscience). This rule includes two others: First, try to understand clearly what is your duty in every matter; then, when you are convinced what your duty is, do it, for the sole reason that you are sure that it is your duty."[1]

The only possible practical criterion of morality is, then, the actual conviction or the actual conscience. If we are told that this conscience should seek enlightenment by consulting the consciences of other men, we reply that this is implied in the rule itself; for it is my own conscience which tells me that I ought to consult the consciences of others. And, besides, there may be a case in which the conscience of a man will feel itself morally superior to the consciences of all others (as with Socrates), and neither can, nor ought, to be sacrificed to them. Is it said that we should hold our consciences in subjection to the word of God, or to that of his ministers? I say again, that I submit to the word of God, only because I am convinced that this is my duty; and here, again, it is my personal conviction which remains the ultimate criterion of the moral law.

The principle of personal conviction as a supreme rule of duty does not exclude that practice so highly recommended by religion, and which philosophers themselves have not ignored; that is, the *direction of the conscience*.[2] This practice is in perfect conformity with experience and common sense. What can be more natural than that those who are

[1] *System der Sittenlehre*, pp. 142, 147.

[2] Consult in the *Moralistes sous l'Empire Romain*, by M. C. Martha, the interesting chapter entitled, *Sénèque, Directeur de Conscience*.

wisest should guide and instruct those who are less wise? Moreover, as we have seen, each of us is naturally inclined to delude himself as to the state of his conscience. Led away, and more or less blinded, by his passions, each one of us needs to place himself before an impartial spectator, and to generalize the motives of his actions, in order to perceive their moral value. But this abstract and invisible spectator is very cold: it is difficult to evoke him. One must be already superior to one's passions, and must see himself clearly, before he will be able to stand apart from himself, and regard himself with an impartial eye. Is it not more efficacious to choose a judge and spectator who lives and speaks, whose conscience will arouse our own, whose authority will impress us, and before whom we shall dread to blush?

All this is true; but the direction of conscience should not be, either with him who undertakes it, or with him who seeks it, a means of relieving the individual from his own conscience by substituting for it that of another. All direction should have for its object, to enable him who submits to it to direct himself. Just as you intrust yourself to the care of a physician so that you may become able to do without him, so you should put yourself in the hands of a moral physician, only to gain that health and strength which consist in self-government.

From the principle given previously, Fichte draws this apparently paradoxical consequence: that there is no such thing as an *erroneous* conscience. Kant had already enunciated the same theory, but did not attach much importance to it: it is, on the contrary, one of the important principles of Fichte's philosophy.

"The conscience [he says] never deceives, and can never deceive itself. . . . It renders the ultimate decision, which is without appeal. To attempt to rise above one's conscience is to attempt to go out of one's self, to separate one's self from one's self."

This principle seems contrary to common sense, and even

dangerous in its results. It justifies, apparently, all fanaticisms, all aberrations of the moral sense, all the illusions of an over-wrought imagination. One might even go so far as to cry with Jacobi in a moment of enthusiasm —

"Yes, I am that impious one who would fain lie, as Desdemona lied in dying; deceive, as did Pylades, declaring himself to be Orestes, that he might die for him; kill, as did Timoleon; break his oath and the law, as did Epaminondas and John de Witt . . . because the law is made for man, and not man for the law."[1]

This eloquent utterance may be accepted as the vivid and pathetic expression of a truth which is recognized by all men, which is, that in certain special cases a certain violation of duty may have the appearance of heroism. Such errors may be excused, or even admired. But if you develop them into a principle, and maintain without restriction the sovereignty of the conscience, do you not suppress all law and all principle? We may admit with the theologians that a conscience in error *excuses* an act, but not that it is never in error.

It seems to me easy enough to solve this difficulty. The judgment pronounced by the conscience in each particular case is, in reality, composed of two judgments: 1. Such an action is your duty; 2. Perform this action because it is your duty. Now, in the first of these judgments the conscience may be mistaken, for it may happen that a certain action which I believe to be my duty is not my duty. But it is not mistaken in the second; for, if it is certain that any given action is my duty, I ought to perform it. If, then, it be agreed that the name of conscience shall be applied only to the second of these two judgments, to the act by which I declare, that, a certain action being my duty, I ought to perform it, it is clear that such a judgment is never errone-

[1] Jacobi, Letter to Fichte, p. 23. It is curious that this passage, which is merely an exaggeration of Fichte's principle, was written by Jacobi in opposition to Fichte's philosophy. So little are philosophers inclined to understand each other!

ous. In other words, if, in a judgment of conscience, we leave out of consideration the *matter* of the act, and regard only the form, there will evidently remain only the will to do one's duty, which is necessarily infallible. Where, then, is the error? It lies in the judgment which decides that a certain action is a duty. Now, Kant admits that we may deceive ourselves in this matter, and he advises us to enlighten our intelligences as to what is, or is not, our duty: thus he makes a distinction between the intelligence and the conscience. It is the first which tells us, Such a thing is your duty. It is the second which says to us, Do such a thing because it is your duty. All paradox disappears.

It may be said in a general way, that to will to do one's duty is to do one's duty, and that there is no other duty. But here the word duty is ambiguous: it may be understood objectively or subjectively. Subjectively, and in my own eyes, I can have no duty but that which I consider as such;[1] but objectively, and abstractly, to an intelligence knowing my relations with all things, I might have duties entirely different from those recognized by me. Duty *in itself* is, then, not the same as duty *relative to ourselves*. I can never, in fact, rise to that ideal state of an absolute intelligence: but I may advance farther and farther in the knowledge of my nature, and, from my relations with other men, I may come to know myself better than I did before, and thus discover other duties of which I had hitherto no conception, but which are superior to those which I had previously imposed upon myself. I recognize, for instance, that when I was a young man I allowed myself to do many things which a better knowledge of my true life here below would have forbidden: I recognize, being a father, many things which I did not understand as a son. I transport, so to

[1] In this sense Hemsterhuys could say; "Brutus, in killing Cæsar, may have committed a crime against the laws of society; but within the soul of Brutus this action was undoubtedly in conformity with the eternal order." See Em. Grucker, *Hemsterhuys*, p. 139.

speak, these new duties, of which I was not conscious, into my past; I compare and contrast them with the inadequate ideas of duty which my conscience then held: thus I form the idea of relative and abstract duty. Undoubtedly if I were to *judge* myself in the past, I know that I ought to take for a standard my conscience as it then was; but, if I am to judge myself in an abstract and absolute manner, I take as a standard my present conscience; and I can conceive an ideal state in which, knowing the true nature of things, I could judge myself in an infallible and absolute manner. But though I never attain this ideal conscience, my personal experience and that of humanity is enough to teach me that there may be an abstract duty, of which my actual duty is, as Kant said, but the shadow and the anticipative image.

Fichte's principle, "Obey your conscience," has been attacked as taking from morals all scientific character. If, they say, the conscience is the sole and final judge of human actions; if, to distinguish good from evil, it is sufficient to refer to the sort of instinct, more or less deceptive, which each of us has within him, to that divine voice which speaks to us with a mysterious authority — then moral science becomes useless: it will be of no use to teach us what our duties are, since we know this already. Moral science is at an end when it is summed up in this formula; Obey your convictions, obey your conscience.

This objection rests upon a confusion of ideas which it is easy to make clear. Science is one thing, action is another. The problem which Fichte tried to solve was this: How should one act at the moment when the necessity for action presents itself? Then, and then alone, the only possible rule is to obey one's conscience: it is impossible to give any other. This is plain. If I do not obey my own conscience, shall I obey that of another? But why should I have any more confidence in another person's conscience than in my own? Obey the word of God, they say. But is it not my conscience which tells me that I ought to obey the word of

God? Obey the traditions of your ancestors. But can I, and ought I, to do this if they seem to my actual conscience unjust and false? Moreover, is it not my conscience that tells me that I ought to respect the wisdom of my fathers, the honorable traditions of my family and of my race, the sacred exhortations of religion, and the teachings of my instructors? Whatever is said, and whatever authority is invoked, there will always come a final moment when I must decide according to my conscience.

But this purely practical rule of obedience to one's conscience, does not in the least exclude scientific and abstract research into the principles, and the consequences, of which moral science is composed. This science is founded, like all others, on analysis and on reasoning. It seeks to determine duty in each particular case by referring to general laws already recognized. These laws themselves it establishes by the study of human nature; and although it starts with the fact of the moral consciousness — that is to say, of the distinction between good and evil — as a primitive fact, yet it does not confine itself to the statement of this fact, but interprets it, frequently correcting and enlightening it. Just as physics, beginning with the facts given by the senses, soon rises above sensation, and teaches us to go beyond it, so moral science, beginning with the moral sense, teaches us to educate it, and to substitute an enlightened conscience for one that is blind. But an enlightened conscience is still a conscience. Besides, when it is necessary to act, each one must appeal to the conscience which he has at the very time when he acts.

Even from a practical point of view, the rule; "Obey your conscience," is far from meaning that one should act blindly and without reason; and it is obligatory on each person that he should make every possible effort to know and choose his true duty, and to distinguish it from apparent duty. But, however deeply and profoundly this examination may be pushed, it must come to an end; for the necessity for action

is present. Now, at this last moment, the examination being made, reflection having been completed, what, I ask, can be the rule of action? "Do what you *ought*," says one. Yes; but what ought I to do? this is the problem. If one reflects, one will see that there can be no rule but this: "Do what you *believe that you ought* to do." This is the same thing as saying, "Obey your conscience."

Besides, without excluding reflection from its part in human conduct, and without pretending that one should await, like Socrates, the voice of a familiar *dæmon*, it must not be forgotten, that, from a practical point of view, it is not well to indulge in too much reasoning. An over-subtle analysis of moral difficulties, a too curious investigation into the *pros* and *cons*, is more apt to obscure the conscience than to enlighten it. The latent sophistries of passion and personal interest will be able to conceal themselves under the apparent impartiality of a too greatly prolonged examination; and reason, while thinking that it is pleading the cause of wisdom, is often the unconscious advocate of our hidden weaknesses. Another danger, too often resulting from deliberation in moral affairs, is the discouragement of the will, leaving it in suspense between the two sides of the question, incapable of choosing either one or the other. Doubtless one should do all in his power to avoid acting under a mistake; but still, there is a rule superior to this, which is, that one must act. Society has tribunals which judge in the last resort, and from which there is no appeal. In practice, it is equally necessary to have a judgment in the last resort which is assumed to be infallible. However perplexing a case may be, it is necessary that it should be brought to an end. In every thing it is necessary that there should be a final decision.

But, since the individual conscience is the sole and final judge when it becomes necessary to act, does it therefore follow, as the contemporaneous English school maintains, that there is no moral truth outside of and beyond the individual conscience? Must we believe that there is no other

standard of good and evil than the state of the individual conscience? This question is the one that was discussed by Plato and Protagoras: it is the great battle-field on which sceptics and dogmatists, the defenders and the adversaries of metaphysics, meet, and hold combat. I will here consider this question simply from the stand-point of moral science.

An English philosopher of the positivist school, Mr. Alexander Bain, opposes, in a recent work,[1] the doctrine of universal moral ideas, and the hypothesis of an absolute conscience, the model and type of individual consciences. He specially attacks upon this point Dr. Whewell, the organ of the contrary opinion.

Dr. Whewell had spoken thus: —

"It appears from what has just been said, that we cannot properly refer to our conscience as an ultimate and supreme authority. It has only a subordinate and intermediate authority; standing between the supreme law and our own actions. . . . Each man's standard of morals, is a standard of morals, only because it is supposed to represent the supreme standard. . . . As each man has his reason, in virtue of his participation in the common reason of mankind, so each man has his conscience in virtue of his participation in the common conscience of man."

Mr. Bain objects to this. What, then, is this standard? he asks. Where is it to be found? Let it be produced. Is it some one model conscience, like Aristotle's "serious man"?[2] Is it the decision of a public body, authorized to decide for the rest of the community? We regulate our watches, the English philosopher says at another time, by the Greenwich observatory: where is the type, the measure, the standard, by which each one may set his watch in morals? It is a stretch of language to maintain the existence of such a thing as truth in the abstract — that is to say, abstracted from all perceiving or conceiving minds.

[1] *The Emotions and the Will*, by Alexander Bain, 2d ed., London, 1865. Mr. Bain is also the author of a remarkable work, *The Senses and the Intellect*.

[2] In his *Ethics*, Aristotle, modifying the formula of Protagoras, says; "It is the virtuous man who is the measure of good and of evil."

There must be a select number of persons, or some one person, holding moral truths in this typical, perfect, absolute form. Let this favored mortal be named; let him be produced; but do not let us hear any more of an abstract conscience, floating in the air, without a subject, and, as yet, never perceived by any one.

This is not the proper place in which to discuss the philosophical problem of the objectivity of our knowledge, and of the union of the universal and of the individual in the human reason. Without touching this question, let us grant that every judgment (moral judgments being included) is always the act of an individual spirit affirming or denying, approving or blaming; that what is called the truth, and is laid down as a rule, a law, a measure for individual belief, is never any thing more than an abstract of what is universally, or nearly universally, thought by individual reasons, including my own; that even when one has reason to think that that to which he adheres and which he obeys is the word of God, yet still it is the individual reason which recognizes this word of God by certain signs (miracles, prophecies, duration, moral character, etc.); that the reason called impersonal is simply that which is held in common by all individual reasons; that Averroës' doctrine of the unity of the intellect[1] cannot possibly be accepted, and can hardly be comprehended; that even if one were to go so far as to say with Malebranche that we see every thing in God, it would still be each one of us who would read, as in an open book, the divine thought; finally, that in every hypothesis the universal reason, the universal conscience, is the resultant of what is held in common by every individual reason and every individual conscience.

But, even if we grant all these premises, I do not see how they contradict the doctrine of a truth in itself, a morality in itself, seen more or less clearly by all individual reasons,

[1] Averroës said that there was but one single intelligence for all mankind. See Renan, *Averroës et l'Averroïsme*.

which approach each other more closely in proportion as they approach the common aim.

Each man, taken by himself, can and should be judged only by his actual conscience: he even ought not to act except according to this conscience. In this sense, it is proper to say that morality is subjective. But this permission is given to the actual conscience, only because it is supposed to be the anticipation and the approximate and provisory presentation of an absolute conscience, which would immediately know the true law, as it is in itself. It is because the agent, while following his conscience as it is at the moment for the lack of a better, has at heart the intention of acting in obedience to the absolute conscience (which he would follow if he knew it): it is for this reason, I say, that this intention is accepted as the fact. It is in this sense that Fichte is right in saying that the only duty is, to will to act conformably to one's duty.

But it is evident that this permitted assimilation of the relative and individual conscience with the absolute conscience is legitimate, only on condition that the agent, while obeying his actual conscience, shall constantly do all he can to enlighten this conscience and to come nearer to the absolute conscience, though he can never entirely assimilate the two. For, if we admit the principle that there is nothing but individual consciences, I do not see why one should be preferable to another. There would even be no apparent reason for changing the moral state of society: since all consciences are of equal value, it is better to keep what one has than to change it for another. At the very utmost, consciences would be changed only like tastes.

Mr. Bain admits but one primitive and universal fact in moral science: it is the fact of approbation and disapprobation. But does not the very fact, that, among human actions, there are some of which I approve, and others of which I disapprove, show that I have a certain rule by which I approve or disapprove? Now, if we inquire what this rule is,

we shall see that it depends on my comparison of my action, or that of other men, with an ideal action which has, or has not, been accomplished, but which should be performed. For instance, I have before me an *Ego* who told the truth instead of lying, or bore an injury instead of getting angry. If I blame either myself or others, it is because I compare myself or them with this ideal man within my mind, and the two do not accord. I approve, on the contrary, when my actions, or those of other men, are in harmony with this ideal man, or differ but slightly from him; and, if we reflect that no particular man was ever absolutely like this man of whom I have a conception (which made the Stoics say that there never was a truly wise man, not even Zeno nor Socrates), it must be admitted that we conceive the idea of a man in himself, distinct from every individual man, and to whom each one approaches, or from whom each differs, more and more.

But where, they say, will you find this man in himself, this ideal, this type which never has been and never will be realized? Is not this a pure abstraction? Undoubtedly. I am far from maintaining the Platonic doctrine of the man in himself. It is evidently experience which gives us the elements of this conception, but it is also certain that no individual experience has given the whole of it to us. In each particular case, seeing a man who acts in a certain way, I imagine another who would do better. Having seen this one in his turn, I imagine a third who would do better still; and soon, familiarizing myself with this method of reasoning, I conceive that every man, however excellent he may be supposed to be, may always be conceived as inferior to some other whom I could imagine. At the end of this *processus*, I conceive a man whose excellence cannot be surpassed. It is this double necessity of having a moral type or model superior to each man in particular, yet which should not be an empty abstraction, which gave birth to the grand Christian conception of the God-man. On the one

hand, none but God can be perfect: on the other, only man can serve as a model for man.

Mr. Bain has well represented the moral act as a combat, — the warfare of two powers. But, when we speak of a combat, that implies that there is a victory to be won, an aim to be pursued. This end is the transformation of man: it is the old man sacrificed to the new man, the flesh to the spirit. Under whatever form the moral conflict is represented (even if we see in good only the ultimate and highest quintessence of personal interest), it must be admitted that there is always an end superior to the special sensation that we may have in a given case. Hence it is not because we approve or disapprove that there is good and evil, but it is because there is good and evil that we approve or disapprove. We ought, then, to endeavor to adapt our approbation to the nature of things, instead of taking our approbation itself as the ultimate standard; for approbation cannot be a reason for itself to itself.[1]

What is, then, this ideal, absolute, infallible conscience, the conscience of the human race, as Mr. Whewell calls it? It is the conscience which sees immediately, intuitively, what the ideal man ought to do in any supposable circumstances, with the same clearness and the same certainty that we see it in special circumstances. For instance, imagine a man as about to denounce calumniously his intimate friend, doing this without provocation, in order to send him to death, and to enrich himself with spoils as informer. There is no conscience which cannot see clearly what the ideal man would do under those circumstances. Now, imagine a conscience which could tell with the same clearness what the ideal man would do under any and all circumstances, and you will have the ideal and absolute conscience.

It is certainly no more possible to realize such a conscience

[1] Even if we accept the principle of personal interest, it will not be the individual approbation which will be the measure; for experience proves that one may be mistaken, even in regard to his own interest.

in practice, than it would be to produce the absolute type to which it answers. Just as there is no perfect man, so there is no perfect conscience. But this conscience, which does not exist in a real and actual state, does exist in the state of tendency. It is the effort which humanity makes to attain this state of perfect conscience which serves to free it progressively from the errors and illusions of the imperfect conscience. It is the *idea*, as the Hegelians say, which successively breaks the inferior forms to attain the superior form: it is "the immanent end," to use another formula, dear to the same school. If we do not admit something of this sort, no conscience can be regarded as superior to any other conscience: and from thenceforth there will be no more moral progress, not only for the species, but even for the individual; for why should I prefer my conscience of to-day to that of yesterday, and why should I make any effort to attain a higher degree of conscience? In a word, why should I try to perfect myself? Every degree of moral perfection is a perfecting of conscience: it is not merely obedience to conscience which is a duty; it is a duty to render one's conscience more and more delicate and exacting, and there would be no sense in this if every conscience were of equal value. Now, we cannot establish degrees of comparison between consciences, except as we compare them with a typical conscience, toward which we rise continually, but which we never attain, and which, though itself latent, is, nevertheless, the principal motor of moral activity.

CHAPTER II.

MORAL INTENTION.

THE theory of *intention*, which deserves further study, is closely connected with that of the moral consciousness. It has given rise to numerous and perplexing difficulties. Let us first distinguish the different meanings of the word.

One has the *intention* to do a thing; one does it *intentionally;* one does it, finally, *with* a certain *intention*. In these three cases, the same words express quite different shades of ideas. For instance, to intend to do a thing is to have such a project, or such an idea: it is to imagine the thing as done, and wish to do it, yet without being fully decided. Thus understood, intention is a semi-resolution, a semi-will. Frequently, in fact, in common parlance the will is confounded with the *intention* of doing a thing. I propose to myself that I will sooner or later take a wise course; but, so long as I do not take it, it is the same as if I had no such intention. This is why it is commonly said, "Hell is paved with good intentions." The intention is an incomplete volition: it is, so to speak, a *velleity*, but not a firm and decisive act of the will. When it is said, "The intention should be accepted for the act," the maxim will be true or false according to the meaning which is given to the word intention; for, if by intention is meant simply a vague velleity which never manifests itself in acts, the intention cannot possibly be accepted for the act. If, on the contrary, by intention is meant the voluntary act itself — that is, a resolution taken which has been revealed only by the event — the maxim is then true; but this would be extending too far the meaning of the word.

In the second case, to perform an act *intentionally* is to accomplish this act, knowing that one accomplishes it, and wishing to do so; it is performing it with consciousness and reflection, with a knowledge of the reason; it is, moreover, to have proposed to one's self the accomplishment of that very act, to have chosen it, to have given it the preference over every other, to have consented to it, and to have accepted it with all its consequences. This is why the intention is an essential part of responsibility. When we wish to exculpate ourselves from an act which has had unpleasant consequences, we say that we did not do it intentionally: familiarly, we did not *mean* to do it. He who has done good unintentionally is no more praiseworthy than he who has done evil unintentionally is culpable. The law recognizes this distinction; and, if in some cases it punishes a homicide committed through imprudence, this is because the imprudence is not always unintentional; and, moreover, even if there is no blame, he who has done the evil should always repair the damage.

Finally, an act may be performed *with* a certain *intention:* in this case, the intention is synonymous with the aim. To act intentionally is to act in reference to an *aim:* it is to propose to one's self some definite object. One may learn to make weapons, either with the intention of exercising his body, or with the intention of making use of them. One may take care of his health with the intention of enjoying life better, or with the intention of being better able to perform one's duties. Thus, in the latter case, the intention means principally the *motive* of the act; in the first, the *project* of the act, and in the second the *consent* to the act. In whatever sense it is used, the word intention always implies, more or less distinctly, the idea of an *aim* (*tendere in*); and it is the nature of this aim which gives to the act its moral character.

Here arises a moral difficulty of the gravest importance. Is it the intention which constitutes the morality of the act?

If not, then one would be responsible for an act done unintentionally: one would not have the benefit of a good intention more or less assisted by circumstances. If it is, then a good intention is a sufficient justification for a bad action: it will be enough, as has been said, to *direct* one's intention toward good; and evil will then become good. In other words, we should soon reach that principle, the danger of which is well known; "The end justifies the means."

It seems impossible, on the one hand, to renounce the principle that the intention makes the morality of the act; and, on the other, it is impossible to admit that other principle that the end justifies the means. It cannot be, then, that the second principle results logically from the first; and the difficulty is to disentangle them.

I have already distinguished between the two expressions — to act *intentionally* (*avec* intention), and to act *with* a certain intention (*dans une* certaine intention). Is there not here a distinguishing element which will aid us to solve the proposed problem? Unquestionably, in order that an act may be good or evil, it must have been done intentionally: nothing which is accomplished by chance, unconsciously, without desiring it, under constraint, contrary to our intentions, can be imputed to us. Only that which we have expressly desired can belong to us morally. In this sense the character of the act depends upon the intention.

But when I perform an act, not only intentionally, but *with* a certain intention, there is something more. It is not merely this act which I desire, but another also: I desire the first only *for the sake of* the second, only as a *means* of reaching the second. The second is the *reason*, the *aim* of the first. I intend both; for this reason I am responsible for both; but I desire the first only *with* the intention of attaining the second. I have, in a certain sense, a double intention; two intentions, subordinate one to the other; in a certain sense, two subordinate wills. It is in this sense that the theologians speak of God as having two kinds of wills — an *antecedent* and a *consequent* will.

The question then presents itself in this form: if we must admit in a general way that the moral character of an act comes from the intention which accompanies it, does it follow, that, when there is a double intention, it is the second of these which gives moral character to the first? that of two given acts, the first of which is only a means for attaining the second, it is the second which gives to the first its moral character? Such a result is by no means involved in the principle.

In the first case, only one action is really in question. It is this act, which, to become imputable, must be done intentionally. But this intention does not arise from the act; it is the act itself which is an end; and it is precisely in proportion as I desire this act, and not another, that I am virtuous or culpable. In the second case, on the contrary, there are two acts. That which I expressly desire is the second, not the first: I only perform the first because it is necessary to the accomplishment of the second. The point is, to decide whether an act which is bad in itself can become good, or at least indifferent, if it is the means of accomplishing another act which we judge to be good. It is plain that this second case is not at all similar to the first.

Some may persist, and may say that this distinction is not sufficient. In order that an act may acquire a moral character, it is not enough that it should be done *intentionally:* it must be done *with a certain* intention. It is not enough, indeed, that I should desire a certain act, but I should desire it because it is a good and obligatory act. It is necessary, Kant says, not only that my act should be in *conformity with* duty, but that it should be performed *for the sake of* duty. The same act may be good or evil according as it is performed for the sake of duty or for self-interest. It is the *maxim* of the action, says Kant again, in other words, its *motive*, which determines its morality. It is in vain that I expressly desire such or such an act, as children or savages desire it: my act remains innocent, indifferent, neither moral

nor immoral, so long as I have not apprehended the idea of duty, of law, of an aim to be followed. So soon as this idea arises, morality is born with it; and according as I do, or do not, desire to conform to it, I am virtuous or culpable. Hence it follows that the morality of my act is due, not to my intention *of doing* it, but to the intention *with which* I do it. In other words, we have here, as in the second case previously cited, two intentions — the intention of performing the act, and the intention of obeying the call of duty or of interest. Thus the same act may be good or evil according to the end which one has in mind, from which it seems to result that the end justifies the means.

The difficulty is, then, even greater than we had supposed; since, whichever way we turn, it is the end which gives character to the action. A certain action, even an intentional one, is indifferent if I have no other end but itself; it becomes good if, in performing it, I have as my end the fulfiling of my duty; and it is evil if I do it with any other end. Might we not say by analogy, that a certain action, indifferent in itself, becomes good if I perform it in view of a certain duty, and evil if I perform it from any other motive? For instance, the act of killing might be blamable if it were accompanied by hatred, by selfishness, by the spirit of revenge, or of cupidity; but if I perform it to serve my country (by delivering it from a tyrant), to serve God (in defending the true faith), to render service to a friend (by preserving him from a traitor), this action might become good. Thus people have been led to justify political and religious assassinations, and even private assassination. And yet apparently nothing more is done than to apply Kant's rule — that is, that an act which is morally good is one that is performed *for the sake* of duty; that is, *in view of* a duty.

In spite of all this, I still maintain that the solution of the difficulty lies in the distinction which I have made above. In fact, an action is completely intentional only when we

choose it and wish it with all its characteristics; that is to say, with a full consciousness of its moral value. Otherwise, we may always say of a moral agent what Jesus Christ said of his executioners: "They know not what they do." To know what one does, it is necessary, not only to choose a certain act, but to choose it knowing that it is good or evil, and to perform it so far as one believes it to be good, or although one knows it to be evil. And this is precisely what I mean by acting intentionally (*avec intention*). But, in such a case, the goodness of the act is a character intrinsic in itself: the act is good or evil in itself, and not as a *means* of attaining some other thing. When I say that I perform an act *for the sake* of duty, I do not mean that the duty is an aim exterior to the act, some other act, different from the one in question, some consequence of my action; for the essential characteristic of duty, as Kant has shown, is, that it is not the *means* of attaining some *end*. An obligatory action is one which is good in and by itself. It is one thing to perform an act because it is a duty (which is what Kant means), and another to perform an act in view of some duty other than itself.

According to the maxim that the end justifies the means, no act would be good or evil in itself: it would become so only as a means of attaining a good or evil end. Now, Kant has especially remarked — and this is the most original part of his analysis of duty — that duty commands us to perform an act for its own sake, and not that we may attain a certain aim, even were this aim itself good and legitimate. The maxim that the end justifies the means, seems, on the contrary, to destroy the very idea of duty. For if every action is indifferent in itself, and has no value except as it contributes toward some other action, it may be said of the latter also that, in itself, it is neither good nor evil, but that it, in its turn, has no value except as it contributes toward some other end still farther removed; and thus, passing from action to action, no one being considered as good or evil in

itself, nothing is left upon which to found the principle of morality.

In truth, if one who performs a bad action to attain a noble end deceives himself, and believes this action good, he may be excused in this case, as in all similar ones, in virtue of the principle that invincible ignorance is an excuse; but we are not speaking of a case like this. The question is, whether, when we know distinctly that an action is evil — as, for instance, the act of killing any one treacherously — we have, nevertheless, the right to perform this act because the end for which we permit ourselves to do it is good. It is in this well-defined case that I hold, with the general conscience, that an action which is evil in itself does not change its character because it procures happy results, not only for ourselves, but even for our fellow-creatures.

Undoubtedly there are, as we have seen, cases of conflict between our different duties; and some of those conflicts raise questions which it is extremely difficult to answer. But if a man, hesitating between two imperative duties, and able to fulfil but one, being, moreover, forced to act, and not able to take refuge in abstaining from action — if this man, I say, in such a situation, ought to perform that one of the two duties which his conscience tells him is the more important, must we therefore conclude, that, in all circumstances, any duty whatever may be sacrificed to some other duty, which was previously judged to be superior? must we accept, as a moral rule, the principle that the end justifies the means?

But we must not attempt to avoid this new difficulty which presents itself. As we have seen, there is certainly a comparative scale of duties: as Fénelon has said, we owe more to humanity than to our own country, more to our country than to our family, more to our family than to our friends, more to our friends than to ourselves; and, within ourselves, we owe more to the soul than to the body, and more to the body as a whole than to each one of its parts. Thus amputation becomes legitimate if it serves to preserve

the body; thus the sacrifice of life is legitimate, if otherwise we must lose our honor; thus we ought to sacrifice, if not our moral dignity, at least our life and our property, for our family and our country; we should sacrifice the property, and even the lives, of our children, for the salvation of our country: and, if we do not say that it is our duty to sacrifice our country for humanity, it is only because it is difficult to imagine a case in which the salvation of our country would be contrary to the good of humanity in general; but it is most certain, that we ought not to procure happiness for our country at the expense of humanity.

In whatever way we may understand the comparative scale of duties, there certainly is such a scale. But then, must we not admit, that, when we are compelled to sacrifice an inferior duty to one that is superior, we act by implication on the principle that "the end justifies the means"? For to send one's son to death is certainly a crime, but to send him to death for the salvation of one's country is certainly a good action. It is, however, the same action in both cases: where is the difference? In the intention, in the aim. To risk one's health is a fault; but to risk it, or even to destroy it, for the good of men, is an heroic action. Where lies the difference between these actions, approved and admired by the public conscience, and those other actions which it justly blames — to kill a tyrant to deliver one's country, to flatter and cringe to enrich one's family, to deceive men to make them happy?

We have seen, in one of the preceding chapters, the rules which should be observed in forming a scale and standard of duties. It is evident, that, when once this order is established, we shall be obliged to prefer one duty to another; and it is impossible to escape this necessity. In a case in which the public conscience does not admit the sacrifice, it is because it declares — rightly or wrongly — that the duty violated is more sacred than that to which it is sacrificed. This principle, then, can never be actually contested: that

in the case of two conflicting duties, one of the two being necessarily sacrificed, it is the lesser which must yield to the greater. For instance, who will deny that a duty of politeness should yield to a duty of humanity? Where, then, is the limit? and must we consent to admit that a good intention authorizes a bad action — that the end justifies the means?

There is, first, a case in which it is easy to answer and to reject this maxim. This is when one has been led into a certain action by some odious or contemptible motive, and seeks to satisfy one's self by persuading one's self that one is pursuing a noble and exalted aim. Cases like these are those *directions of intentions*, justified by some casuists, which Pascal has so justly and scathingly condemned. For instance, John the Fearless caused the assassination of the Duke of Orleans, evidently at the instigation of an insatiable ambition: he attempted to justify his crime by the pretext of the public good, and made one of his partisans apologize for it by appealing to the principle that it is permissible to kill a rebellious vassal. Nero had his mother assassinated, evidently led by a natural ferocity which no human sentiment could ameliorate: he justified this abominable crime by attributing it to reasons of state. People humiliate themselves to obtain high positions; but they say, and make others say, that it is to serve their country. People deceive, they insinuate themselves into families, they get possession of others' property, from a spirit of domination and cupidity; but they persuade themselves, and try to persuade others, that it is for the love of God. Others give themselves up to all sorts of prodigality, through love of pleasure and luxury; and they pretend to believe that it is through grandeur of soul, and to show their contempt for riches. In a word, the art of giving one's conscience an accommodating bias, of giving a good appearance to bad actions, and of purifying impurity by sanctimonious calculations, or by fine-sounding apologies, is an odious art, which can in no

way embarrass the moralist, and in answer to which it is sufficient to refer to the admirable pages of Pascal.[1]

There is still another case in which there is an evident abuse of the principle that the morality of an act lies in its intention. It is when a very simple, very clear, and very necessary, duty is sacrificed to one that is vague, and more or less uncertain. The human conscience is revolted by this abuse, though it cannot clearly explain in what it consists. Here the sophistry lies in believing that love of good in general is sufficient to excuse a notoriously bad action. For instance, what duty can be more plain and simple than that which forbids assassination — that is to say, the treacherous murder of a defenceless man who has not attacked you? In this case, I say, the duty of not assailing human life is one of the clearest in the world. On the contrary, the duty of saving one's country, however obligatory it may be, is far from being equally clear and simple. There are a thousand

[1] Connected with the theory of the *directions of intention* is that of *mental reservations*, also ridiculed and brought to shame by Pascal. Two kinds of this are distinguished.

First, The purely mental reservation. Second, The reservation which is not purely mental — *pure mentalis, non pure mentalis*. The latter is that which may be recognized by certain exterior signs. It is your business to attend to these signs. In accordance with these principles, Father Ligori permits mental reservation in the following cases: —

1. A confessor, asked whether he has knowledge of a certain crime, may answer on oath, "No," mentally adding, "not as a man;" for no one has a right to question him as a confessor. This holds true, even when the judge asks the question specifically, and mentions the act of knowing as a minister of God; for he has not the right to ask this question. 2. A person accused, or a witness if interrogated by an illegal authority, has a right to deny knowledge of a crime of which he actually knows, with the mental reservation, *Crimen de quo legitime possit inquiri*. 3. One who has received a loan, and has returned it, has the right to deny that he received it, making the mental reservation, *Ita ut debeat solvere*. 4. If he has been forced by constraint to contract marriage, he has a right to say that he has not contracted it, with the mental reservation, *freely*. 5. If asked by a judge whether one has spoken with an accused person, one may deny it, adding mentally, *Ad co-operandum crimini*. 6. An adulteress, asked whether she has had illicit intercourse with a certain man, may say, "I am innocent of this sin," meaning mentally that she has been purified from it by confession. 7. A servant, asked if his master is at home, may say that he is not there, although he is (mentally adding, *In hac*

ways of saving one's country: nothing can be more uncertain than the way proposed. An inviolable respect for human life is a much surer way of serving one's country than to give it the example of homicide. Without accepting literally the distinction between definite and indefinite duties which I have already combated, it must be admitted that some duties present themselves under a stricter and more definite form than do others, and that they are therefore clearer. To sacrifice these clear and definite duties to others whose application is freer and more uncertain, is to break the rules of a good moral responsibility.

It is also an error, and a false application of a true principle, if we reverse the order of the importance of our duties. For instance, to lie, deceive, flatter, violate one's oaths, and be false to one's opinions, in order to be of use to one's family, cannot be morally justified; because personal dignity, or what is generally called *honor*, is of an order which is

janua vel fenestra), or that he has gone out, meaning that he went in the morning, or the day before. 8. Is it permissible to swear to something false, adding in a low voice some true circumstance? Yes, some say without restriction. Yes, others say also; but it must be done in such a way that others can hear something, although they cannot distinguish the sense.

All this strange philosophy is to be condemned, not so much on account of the laxity which it might authorize — for we know that in practice we must grant much to human weakness — but the miserable feature of it, which proves a great poverty of conscience, is the artificial effort which it makes to bring under the rule, by the aid of certain mechanical processes, that which is contrary to it. It must be confessed that here secular morality is superior — I will not say to Christian morality, for this cannot be called Christian, but — to theological and monastic morality, which, in the bareness of the cloisters, loses all feeling of dignity and of virility. If a man like Montaigne, or any other man of the world, frankly admits his weaknesses, and boldly yields to them while confessing them, I can excuse, while I blame, him. But these shabby makeshifts, which attempt to dissimulate evil, and which try to render lawful that which is not so, rouse the just anger of the secular conscience. Here the world and the cloister are, in comparison with each other, like a frank and generous rake, and a crafty hypocrite who observes all conventional forms. A moral education guided by such principles as these could only degrade souls. In reading these pages, one thanks Pascal, and one understands how in his last days he could reply, when asked if he repented of having written his *Provincial Letters*, "If I were to write them again, I would make them more forcible."

superior to material goods. The family has no right to wish for its own happiness at the expense of the honor of its head. This is especially true if merely grandeur, luxury, and external brilliance are in question; for these things, while not rejected by the wise man, should not be sought for by him, even innocently, still less by evil means. At the very utmost, if there were a question of saving one's children from death or destitution, there might be extenuating causes, or circumstances, according to the case. But the moralist cannot consider the exceptions, but only the rules; and the rule is, that the goods of the soul, being superior to the goods of the body, should never be sacrificed to them.

Moreover, in most of the cases in which the maxim that the end justifies the means has been so employed as to be an abuse, it will be seen, that, under pretence of sacrificing a lower to a higher duty, the very duty to which the first is sacrificed is itself practically nullified. Take, for instance, the act of running up debts which one does not pay, so that one may spend the money in charity. This act is evidently self-contradictory: for, in order to assist one person, one plunders another; consequently the act tends to produce the very evil which it is attempted to relieve. Take, again, the question of tyrannicide, so much debated in the sixteenth century. He who kills a tyrant by his own private authority performs an act of precisely the same nature as that for which he blames the tyrant; that is, killing without trial, and on pretence of public necessity. By this very act, he justifies the tyrant in similar ones; for, if the citizen-subject may decide on his private authority that a certain person is a tyrant, the sovereign may also decide by his own private authority that a certain person might become a tyrant. Thus assassination is established as a principle; and it will be thus, whether the example is given by the sovereign or by the people. The assassination of the Duke of Guise resulted in the assassination of Henry III.; so, too, the assassination of the Duke of Orleans, by John the Fearless,

led to the assassination of John the Fearless by Tanneguy. The death of Cæsar led to the death of Cicero. From one act of revenge to another, society floated in a sea of blood. To take a less tragic instance, consider the unscrupulous man of business, who does not adopt vulgar methods, but who enriches himself in a way which is far from being in conformity with the old and strict laws of commercial honor. He will justify himself by saying, that, by his speculations, which are, indeed, irregular, he has rendered a great service to his country by producing great activity in business, by stimulating energy and activity, and consequently developing public prosperity. But such a justification is absurd: for, in violating the laws of honesty, he assails the vital principle of all healthy trade; and, in thus giving a temporary impulse to activity, he insures ruinous disaster. Thus the end does not justify the means, but the means destroy the end itself. Take another example. Under the influence of religious fanaticism, men have immolated to the true religion those who opposed it: this was said to be done for the glory of God. But, in acting thus, religion itself is destroyed; for a God who could delight in these bloody sacrifices, and who could be pleased by the shedding of blood, would not be the good and just God whom religion commands us to love and adore. He would be a wicked and sanguinary deity, who would not deserve to be honored, and to whom the wise man would owe no worship; for he could say to himself, "I am better than such a god." Moreover, to make use of constraint and the fear of death to compel the acceptance of religion, is to destroy religion, because its first requisite is that it should be received in the heart. Compulsory worship is not true worship: still less is hypocrisy, which is the ordinary result of violence. Take another example. Certain illustrious men, some blinded by ambition, others led astray, perhaps, by false principles, have fancied that it was right for them to bear arms against their own country. This was the case with the great Condé and with Gen. Moreau. In

this case the sophistry is clear; for, in this case, one endangers the independence of his country in order to save it, and consequently ruins it in saving it. For, even supposing that one could thus render it material service, its honor would be tarnished; and this is but another way of ruining it.[1]

As to the examples which are, or might be, cited to justify the maxim in question, they are always taken from certain duties which imply special conditions, and are duties only under those conditions. Take, for instance, the duty of economy. It is clear that economy is not the same as saving, and does not consist in denying one's self all expenditure: this would be avarice. It consists in limiting one's expenses to what is strictly necessary, or to a few modest superfluities. But if a case arises in which it is necessary that we should be lavish, this lavishness is in no way contrary to the maxim of economy; and to try to avoid it would be avarice. For instance, in the romance of *Ivanhoe*, the Jew Isaac, who hesitates about sacrificing his fortune to save the honor and the life of his family, gives thereby a proof of his avarice, not of his economy. The illustrious Lady Franklin, who spent all her fortune in despatching expeditions to seek for her husband, lost amid the icebergs of the north, made a wise use of that fortune, which should always be regarded as a means, never as an end.

The same is true in regard to the duty of self-preservation. This duty is based principally upon the ground that it is the *condition* for the fulfilment of all our other duties; for whoever renounces life, renounces with it even morality itself. Now, among the duties of man is that of self-sacrifice for his fellow-creatures. To reject this duty under the pretext that we are forbidden to expose ourselves to death, is a sort of vicious circle: it is sacrificing the very object of life to the

[1] A still more complicated case would arise if one had renounced his nationality, and become responsible for the destiny of another people. This was the case with Bernadotte. But the action would still be culpable, although less so: no one is compelled to be a king.

condition without which that object could not be attained. The avaricious man who sacrifices his well-being to his money — that is, to the means of procuring his well-being — does the same thing; so does the fancied invalid, who sacrifices his health to his regimen. Conditional duties should be sacrificed to absolute duties: this is the solution of the difficulties suggested.

There are also duties which imply the idea of a certain restriction and a certain limit. For instance, the duty of keeping one's word plainly implies an exception *in case of superior force.* The maxim that we should not harm others implies an exception *in case of legitimate self-defence.* "*Ne noceas alteri nisi lacessitus injuria,*" says Cicero.[1] These two exceptions are self-evident, for in the first case it is clear that "no one is bound to perform the impossible:" and, in the second, to deny the right of self-defence is equivalent to authorizing all crimes; since, if good men did not defend themselves against those who are evil, the latter would inevitably become the masters, and would alone remain after the ruin of the former.

The same is true of the other exceptions which Cicero cites. "One should not," he says, "restore to a delirious man his sword." In fact, the duty of restoring any deposit implies the condition that the depositor has possession of his reason.[2] In the same way, the duty of keeping one's promises implies that the execution of the promise must not be fatal to him to whom it was made. For instance, to quote Cicero again, was the Sun under obligation to perform his promise to Phaeton, or Neptune to keep his to Theseus? No, certainly not; for it is implied in every promise, that

[1] *De Officiis*, liv. 1. Perhaps the exception is expressed in terms which are too vague, and might justify any kind of revenge. Hence St. Ambrose has criticised it in his *De Officiis.* But it is plain that Cicero referred only to the right of proper self-defence.

[2] In the celebrated romance of *Werther*, Charlotte had a right to refuse to restore to Werther his pistols, having reason to suspect how he might use them. There was ground for regarding him as a madman.

I cannot pledge myself to do you an injury. So, too, the duty of not using the property of another implies an exception in case of absolute necessity, when it must be supposed that the owner would consent to such a use if he could be consulted.

Thus it is impossible not to accept certain limits, such as the point at which the execution of the duty would become absurd, and would become equivalent to the negation of justice itself. But it is evident that those restrictions should always be understood in a narrow, not a broad, sense. Ought we to admit, with Father Ligori, that the servant whose wages are too small has a right to take from his master whatever is necessary for his support, even when he has voluntarily accepted these wages? This is a case of necessity, he says. Must we admit, with Father Ventura, that it is permissible to violate one's oath, when it is done for the good of a whole people? For, he says, one ought not to keep an oath which is contrary to one's conscience; and it is contrary to one's conscience to cause the unhappiness of a whole people. Must we say, once more with Father Ligori, that a prince has a right to have his enemy killed without a trial, when the trial would create a scandal? Finally, must we say, with those casuists whom Pascal overthrew and brought to scorn, that it is permissible to kill for the sake of an apple? Such latitude in the interpretation of moral exceptions is equivalent to the negation of all morality and all duty. The case of superior force which annuls a promise should clearly be understood to imply an absolute impossibility, not merely a change of circumstances. The right of self-defence applies only to a real, effective, and actually occurring attack, not merely to a threat, or to a hostility which is foreseen. The case of absolute necessity, which authorizes exceptionally the use of another's property, applies only to an actual and absolutely inevitable necessity, not to simple need. The exception of nullity on account of immorality applies to an oath, only when this plainly involves

immorality or injustice; and it should not be wrongfully extended to other cases. The exception based on madness, which authorizes one to refuse to restore a deposit to its owner, should be applied literally, not figuratively. Otherwise one might at any time appropriate the property of another, under the pretext that he would make a bad use of it. Thus the theory of *moral exceptions* cannot be made to authorize the doctrine of *the direction of the intention.*

But, in saying this, do we deny that there are heart-rending situations when the soul, hesitating between two equally sacred duties, knows not which to fulfil, and when it forces itself to action by a sort of moral dictatorship? Must we condemn the heroine of *The Heart of Mid Lothian*, who was not willing to soil her soul with a falsehood, even to save her sister's life? Must we, on the other hand, condemn Desdemona, who in dying tries to save, by a lie, the husband who has slain her? Must we condemn as a parricide Brutus; who condemned to death his own son, a traitor to his country? Must we admire him as a hero? Can we say with the philosopher Hemsterhuys, in speaking of the second Brutus; "What he did was a crime in the eyes of men, but in his own conscience his act was in conformity with the eternal order of things"? We must confess that there is a point where all theory fails, and science has no more formulas to offer. A cowardly complaisance to human weaknesses takes advantage of these extremely rare cases to encroach upon the strict laws of morality. The philosopher merely recognizes that it is not in his power to give rules for every case.

CHAPTER III.

MORAL PROBABILISM.

ALL the difficulties which may arise from the different states of the moral consciousness are brought together, so to speak, under a celebrated theory, which was long noted in schools of theology, and which Pascal made generally known — the theory of *Probabilism*.

Moral probability must be distinguished from logical and philosophical probability. The same expression is used in these cases with very different meanings. Logical probabilism is that theory which, like scepticism, denies that there is any absolute truth in human opinions, and affirms that nothing can be known with certainty. But it differs from scepticism in saying that all things are not equally uncertain, and that some things are more probable than others. Moral probabilism does not give a general denial of the certainty of human knowledge; it does not even deny certainty in morality; it recognizes two principles which give certainty — natural law and the divine law. But it declares, that, outside of this vast domain of certainty, there lies another, where only probability can be found; and it is within this realm of probable opinions, that it seeks to find some rule and test by which choice may be determined.

The theory of probabilism was one of the battle-grounds on which the Jansenists and Jesuits encountered each other in the seventeenth century.[1] Now that the passions of both

[1] I shall not enter here into the purely historical question, how far the Jesuits are to be held responsible for the theory of probabilism. It seems to be settled, that they did not invent it, and that some Jesuit doctors rejected

parties are things of the past, it will, perhaps, be easier to distinguish what was true or false on both sides, than it could have been in the thick of the combat.

In a very able and logical treatise on probabilism,[1] Nicole sums up this doctrine in the two following propositions: 1. Any probable opinion, though it may be false, and contrary to the divine law, is an excuse for sin before God; 2. Of two probable opinions, it is permissible to accept the one which is least certain.

To comprehend this question thoroughly, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the word *probable*. In its general acceptation, an opinion is probable when it has a certain number of arguments in its favor: hence it follows, that the more arguments there are in its favor, the more probable it is. Thus of two opinions the most probable is that one which has the greater number of reasons in its favor.

So far, there is no difficulty; but the question becomes complicated when we consider that an opinion may seem probable from one of two stand-points, either from that of reason, or from that of authority. Thus an opinion which seems to be supported by sound arguments appears to be still more probable when we know that it is sustained by trustworthy authorities; while if we learn, on the contrary, that eminent authorities are opposed to it, this will be a reason for doubting it, and therefore will diminish its probability. Thus there is ground for accepting the distinction made by theologians between two kinds of probability — *internal* and *external* probability, the first of which is founded upon reason, and the second upon authority. When these

it. But it is also certain, that the Jesuits were its principal defenders against the Jansenists, and that the apologists of the Jesuits are also the apologists of probabilism. Moreover, as there is a certain amount of truth in this theory, it does not seem as if one would do the Jesuits any great wrong in attributing it to them.

[1] *Les Provinciales*, with Wendrock's treatises translated into French, vol. iv.

two probabilities do not agree, it becomes a question which ought to give way, and whether it is not permissible to accept an opinion which is *extrinsically* probable in preference to one which is *intrinsically* so. If this be granted, we must then inquire on what grounds an opinion can be said to be extrinsically probable; and here comes in the rule which Pascal has so ridiculed, that "a single serious doctor can, by himself, make an opinion probable."

Let us return to the two propositions already quoted, and which actually give a clear synopsis of the doctrine of probabilism.

For the guidance and instruction of the reader, I will state at the outset, that, from my point of view, the probabilists are right as to the first proposition, and wrong as to the second. Conversely, the Jansenists are right as to the second proposition, but wrong as to the first. Here, as in all other theological contests, it may be said that the Jesuits have defended the cause of liberty, but have pushed it into license; and, on the other hand, that the Jansenists have defended the cause of Christian virtue, but have pushed it into fanaticism.

The first of these two contested propositions is this: a probable opinion, even if false, and contrary to both natural and divine law, is an excuse for sin.

This proposition is merely the logical result of the principle which I have already set forth: Obey your conscience. If I use the word probable in its natural and ordinary sense (not taking into account the difficulty which arises from exterior probability), then a probable opinion is one which presents itself to my conscience supported by more arguments than the contrary opinion can show. How, then, could I obey my conscience, were I to choose the opinion which appears least probable to it?

But, it is said, this opinion is false: it is contrary to natural and divine law. I answer, One of two things is true: either I know this, or I do not know it. If I know it, how can

it be an opinion contrary to natural or divine law? Could such a one appear probable to me, since I began by setting aside as absolutely certain every thing which is plainly in conformity with natural and divine law? If, then, I regard this opinion as probable, it is because it seems to me that it does not conflict with either one of these two laws, and that I do not perceive this disagreement.

Unquestionably man is under obligation to conform to natural law, but not to natural law as it is in itself, but only as he knows it. For how can one be expected to obey a law of which he is ignorant? In civil society, indeed, we practically say, "that no one can be supposed to be ignorant of the law;" because the excuse of ignorance could always be offered, and never disproved, and because it is supposed that everybody will take pains to know about the laws which interest him. But, in regard to natural right and wrong, we cannot resort to such a fiction. As here the conscience is concerned, no one can pretend to be ignorant of that which he really knows; while, on the contrary, if the agent is actually ignorant of the law, it is impossible to hold him obliged to act as if he knew it. Consequently, if he thinks it probable that a certain action is more in conformity with the natural law than a certain other one, he is evidently excusable: still more, he is under obligation[1] to obey this conviction, even if it is a mistaken one.

All theologians admit that "invincible ignorance is an excuse;" and St. Thomas even goes so far as to say that it is a sin to act contrary to an erroneous conscience — always supposing it to be a case of invincible error. The Jansenists could not refuse to admit these principles, which are the conclusions of common sense. But they claim that the probable opinion cannot be classed under the head of ignorance or of invincible error. For, they say, since the opinion is only probable, it cannot be absolutely certain. Some appearance

[1] An excuse, if *permission* is in question; an *obligation*, if a *prohibition* and *duty* are concerned.

of truth is recognized in the contrary opinion. This latter opinion (which by hypothesis is the correct one) is not unknown to you; you even know the arguments for it; hence it is in your own power to forsake your ignorance and your error. Therefore they are not invincible.

But is it not plain that this is sophistry? For, if I say that a certain opinion seems to me probable, I thus assume that I have previously taken all necessary and possible measures to assure myself of the truth, or that I think I have taken them: it is only after such an examination, at least so far as it is possible for me to make it, that I have come to regard a certain opinion as more probable than another. To see more clearly, at least at present, is out of my power: my preference for the false opinion, instead of the true one, is, then, really a case of ignorance or invincible error. Undoubtedly, if the action is one which can be postponed, I may continue the examination for an indefinite time. But, if the action must be performed *hic et nunc*, I am bound to make only such an examination as is practically possible; and, whatever speculative doubt may exist, the very fact that I have chosen the most probable opinion entitles me to claim the benefit of works done in good faith. Finally, if the Jansenist strictness goes so far as to doubt the possibility of man having any good faith with respect to himself, and to assume, that, in alleged cases of involuntary error, there is always — as there certainly is sometimes — a secret and blind partiality for ourselves, I answer, that, as this assumption deprives me of every criterion by which to distinguish true good faith from that which is false, I have a right to regard myself as being of good faith when I am unconscious of my falsehood. Besides, to maintain positively that there is no such thing as an error committed in good faith, is to go far beyond the point in question. The Jansenists did, in fact, go even so far as this. From this point of view, their adversaries were the real defenders of common sense and equity.

They were even the defenders of toleration, at least to a certain extent; and this is one of the most curious points in this quarrel over probabilism, which, under a scholastic form, touches the gravest problems of conscience.

Nicole, in his discussion of probability, wishing to render his adversaries absurd, deduced from it, as a necessary consequence, that heretics are excusable and even innocent. "Not only," said Nicole, "do they retain this maxim, which is so pleasing to all unbelievers, that *every one may be saved while retaining his own religion, if he believes it to be probable:* they even come very near teaching it expressly." He actually quotes a great number of curious passages, taken from the writings of Jesuits, which are in perfect harmony with the true principles of religious tolerance, as we understand this to-day.

Thomas Sanchez actually teaches, "that an infidel, to whom our faith is proposed as being more credible than his own, is not obliged to accept it, save in the article of death, provided the doctrines of his own sect still appear to him credibly probable." Others, like Sancius and Diana, go still farther, and reject even the exception of the article of death. They teach, according to Escobar, "that the infidel is not bound to embrace the faith, even in the article of death." Another Jesuit, Caramuel, very skilful in the dialectics "of probability," according to Nicole, also suggests in the form of a doubt, whether a Lutheran, who is born a Lutheran, is not excusable for retaining his religion which appears to him probable, even though he may also recognize the probability of the Catholic teachings. He takes his arguments, he says, "from the best authors, for the consolation of those who live in Germany, and who have the pain of seeing so many persons, who are otherwise very good people, infected with heresy."

Another Jesuit, Érard Bile,[1] goes still farther, and teaches plainly that people can be saved outside of the Church.

[1] I take these passages from the treatise by Nicole, who could not possibly have suspected that the time would come when these words, so scandalous

"A child does not sin in believing a heresy which is offered to him, and which his parents have taught him — at least, not unless he knows convincing reasons which take all probability from the teachings of his sect. For, so long as it seems to him probable, he does not sin in following it. Hence we can hardly regard as heretics many young girls under twenty years of age, even though they have taken the communion. For who can say that they have no probable argument in favor of their sect? Now, no one sins in following a probable opinion. You tell me [he adds] that there are many older persons who think that they do well in remaining in their sect. I reply that this cannot be sufficient excuse in the case of those who live among Catholics. But in Sweden, in Denmark, and in those provinces of Germany where the Catholic religion is not practised, these persons may be saved, though remaining in their sect, if they commit no sin, or if, in case they do sin, they perform an act of love or of contrition."

Nicole was, then, right in regarding religious toleration as a result of the theory of probabilism: but he was wrong in drawing thence an argument against this theory; for it is a self-evident principle of natural right, that all errors made in good faith are innocent.

"What!" cries Nicole: "even when manners and the moral law are concerned, we may sin without crime if a false religion permits us to do so! For instance, it is certain that the Turks believe both that fornication is permissible between two persons who are free, and that Mahomet was a prophet of God. According to the principles of the Jesuits, they might retain this latter belief, provided that it seems to them probable. Why should they not also be permitted to follow the first, in regard to fornication?" I do not know what the Jesuits answered; but the logical result seems to me plain, and I have no hesitation in accepting it. Plainly, the Turks, or any other nation, have a right to follow the law which seems to them true, while we may enlighten them if we can; but, so long as they remain in the same state of enlightenment, they cannot obey our consciences, but their

in his eyes, would be quoted to the honor of the Jesuits. In fact, those liberal consequences are precisely what the modern adherents of probabilism reject. (See the edition of the *Provinciales*, by the Abbé Maynard, vol. i. p. 198.)

own. We must always come back to the distinction between the subjective and the objective law. The former is the only true law; but it is by the second that we must be judged, provided that it is certain that we have done every thing in our power to understand the first.

Nicole and the Jansenists maintained that man should be judged by the law as it is in itself, and not by the law as it is known to us. For example, they did not hesitate to affirm, on the authority of St. Augustine, that the Jews were not excusable for practising retaliation, "although they followed the terms of the law and the interpretation of their doctors." They said the same of the repudiation of wives. "Not one of their doctors had the slightest suspicion that this was illicit. Moses expressly permitted it. This he did, however, because of the hardness of their hearts, as Jesus Christ said. But how could they imagine that it was solely for this reason? Yet the tradition of the Fathers has always been, that it was never permissible for the Jews to repudiate their wives."[1]

In this case, as in all others, it is evident that the Jansenists abridged liberty as much as possible, while exaggerating personal responsibility. The doctrine of original sin furnishing them with an example of a responsibility which was not due to the individual will, they did not hesitate to apply the same principle everywhere; and, without inquiring how a man can obey a law of which he is ignorant, they required that a man should be judged, not according to the state of his conscience, but according to absolute truth.

In a word, I think that the Jesuits were truly humane and philosophical when they maintained against the Jansenists that the moral agent is responsible only to the extent of his knowledge: thus the first of the two propositions which Nicole condemns is only a perfectly legitimate application of the general principle that no one can obey any conscience but his own. Is the same thing true of the second?

[1] Nicole, *loc. cit.*, p. 97.

The second proposition of probabilism is, that, between two probable opinions, "it is permissible to choose the one which is *least probable* and *least safe*." To comprehend this principle thoroughly, it is necessary to know what distinction is made between the *probable* and the *safe* by theologians who have studied this subject. We know what is meant by a probable opinion (*probabilis*): let us see what is meant by a safe opinion (*tuta*).

In theological usage, an opinion is more *safe* (*tutior*) in proportion as it conforms more completely to the law: it is less safe when it gives greater liberty. Every moral question can always be reduced to this: what ought I to permit myself? from what ought I to abstain? That which gives greater liberty to the individual, more room to personal interest and to the pleasures of life, is always less safe than the opinion which permits less. If I am wrong, I do not risk much: to abstain is undoubtedly a privation, but a privation is a very small matter in comparison with security. To abstain will always be the safest way. For instance, a sick person desires some fruit, drink, or meat: perhaps the satisfaction of this desire would do him no harm, perhaps it might injure him; it is, then, safer to deny himself. By analogy, an opinion in morals is called safer when it restrains the liberty, and gives greater stress to denial, prohibition, and law.

For instance, take the question whether it is permissible to go to the theatre. Suppose there are as many reasons *for* as *against* doing so. The two opinions are, then, equally probable, but they are not equally safe: for, if it is forbidden to go, I risk a great deal by going; while, on the contrary, if it is permitted, I risk little by abstaining. In a word, a safe opinion is one which makes us sure as regards the consequences: and, as the good which is here in question is eternal salvation, it is clear that the stricter an opinion is, the more violence it does to nature, the safer it will be; for by following it I shall never risk losing any thing but a momen-

tary pleasure, while in disregarding it I risk my eternal happiness. Transplanting this theological distinction into philosophy, I should say that the more closely an opinion conforms to moral law the safer it is, while the more latitude it allows to personal interest the less safe it becomes.[1]

A moral opinion may, then, be regarded from two points of view, either as probable or as safe. These two elements should be combined in choosing and preferring an opinion.

Hence come three doctrines — First, One should always prefer the most probable opinion, whether it is more or less safe: this is called *probabiliorism*. Second, One should always prefer the safer opinion, whether it is more or less probable: this is called *tutiorism*. Third, Of two opinions, it is permissible to choose that which is least probable and least safe: this is properly what is called *probabilism*. It may be said, that, in general, the Jesuits advocated probabilism, and the Jansenists tutiorism. Bossuet, who in theology always preferred a medium course, and decisions guided by common sense, advocated probabiliorism; and the Church has done the same, condemning the excesses of probabilism, but not absolutely condemning its principle.

It seems to me impossible to adduce any argument which could authorize us to choose the less probable opinion rather than the one which is more probable. In regard to this, the Jansenists, especially Pascal and Nicole, as well as Bossuet, are the true representatives of good sense and the moral consciousness; and the somewhat shamefaced apologists of probabilism do not offer a single plausible argument in its favor, except that the less probable is, nevertheless, probable to a certain extent. But, since this probability is less than another, how can one choose the less probable with a clear conscience? Let it not be forgotten that we are not now

[1] It seems that some casuists used the word *safe* in an equivocal sense; for Caramuel, quoted by Nicole, says that "a less probable opinion is also the safer *if it is milder*." Here the word is used in a profane and worldly sense, while in theology it is generally used in that which I have explained.

considering an opinion which is *less safe* — that is to say, one which hypothetically grants more to nature or to personal interest; for, if a less probable but safer opinion were in question, it might be said, that, in reality, it is more probable, since the safety is itself an element of probability. In fact, if the more lenient appears to me more probable than the severe opinion, I may readily suppose that this is an illusion caused by the natural indulgence which I feel toward myself, which hides from me my real duty. But such an illusion is impossible in regard to an opinion which is less safe; that is, more lenient. To adopt such an opinion as this when there are more numerous and stronger reasons in support of the opposing opinion, is to act in direct opposition to one's conscience.

I am aware that these principles of probabilism were restricted in their practical application so far as was possible: "One should not be satisfied," it was said, "either with speculative or with probable probability; that is to say, with what was not pretty certain, nor with a probability which could not bear comparison with the motives for the contrary conclusions."[1] But of whatever kind the probability may be, however real, practical, and well founded, so soon as our conscience presents to us more numerous and stronger reasons in favor of the opposite side, it is this opposite side which our conscience advises us to take; and to choose the most agreeable solution is always, whatever may be said, merely a means of evading obedience to conscience.

If probabilism appears untenable in itself, it will appear still more so when we take into consideration the distinction made above between internal and external probability. Thus far we have supposed the probable opinion to be based upon intrinsic arguments; but, according to the theory of probabilism, an opinion might be called probable, provided it was uttered by authorized and commendable theologians. These were called "serious doctors," an expression which

[1] *Abbé Maynard*, p. 196.

Pascal's irony has rendered immortal; and we know, that, according to some casuists, the authority of a single one of these doctors was sufficient to render an opinion probable. They actually intended by this an eminent and weighty authority, such, for example, as that of St. Thomas Aquinas; but, leaving out of consideration the practical objections to giving such latitude to external authority, it is the principle itself which is inadmissible.

In my opinion, the true principle of all moral action is this which I have frequently repeated: Obey your conscience. Hence we should obey our own conscience, not that of another. Unquestionably, as we have seen, this principle does not exclude the right and the duty of consulting consciences which are more enlightened than our own: evidently the reasons given by these wise men are among the arguments which settle the probability of an opinion. But our conscience should obey only arguments, never authority. If I think a case uncertain, I evidently ought to try to become enlightened in regard to it; and each one will do this in his own way, one by consulting his spiritual director, another by reading Plato or Epictetus. But, in every case, the reasons must have been accepted by my conscience before I can submit to them; and I should choose a certain opinion, not because some doctor has thought it probable, but because I myself think it to be so. Thus there can be no probability but an internal one, and authority is in my view merely a means of augmenting this internal probability. In case of disagreement between the two, internal probability should always decide the question. I do not see, indeed, that the probabilists ever declared expressly that probability founded upon reason should give way to probability founded upon authority; for neither Pascal nor Nicole quote any such passages. But it is evident that the general principle of probabilism implies this result; for, if I may prefer the least probable opinion to that which is most probable, it follows that I may prefer an opinion founded upon authority

to one founded upon reason. If it is meant that authority itself is of value only in so far as it offers good arguments, then why speak at all of external authority? We need, then, not serious doctors, but good reasons. A good reason given by any one who is neither a *doctor* nor *serious* ought to be enough to make an opinion probable, but the mere authority of a Thomas Aquinas or an Augustine cannot do this.

If we reject the fundamental principle of probabilism, we shall not necessarily adopt the opposing principle of Jansenism; that is to say, *tutiorism*. Tutiorism is right when it tells us to take the safer of two opinions when it is more probable than the other, or when it is even equally probable. It may also be accepted when it teaches, that, of two opinions which are of unequal probability, it is permissible to choose the least probable if it is the safer; which is the same thing as saying that it is always permissible to follow the strictest principle. But this doctrine goes beyond reasonable bounds when it says not only that this is permissible, but that it is obligatory — in a word, that it is our duty always to choose the safer at the expense of the more probable; for this maxim is really the same as sacrificing reason to fear. It was in obedience to this principle that the Jansenists accepted the most revolting rigor. For instance, is marriage permissible? Clearly, if there is any opinion as to this question which is *probabilis*, *probabilior*, *probabilissima*, it is the affirmative; for, accepting the contrary opinion, the human race must perish. However, the negative, though less probable, is safer: for, after all, marriage is the destruction of virginity, and purity is of greater value: one runs more risk as to his salvation by marrying than by becoming a monk, etc. Hence comes the Jansenist opinion, which Pascal accepted, that marriage is a deicide. As a general thing, all rigorists are tutiorists. For instance, Epictetus forbids the wise man to laugh — not that laughter is a bad thing in itself, but that, by making one habituated to frivolity, it puts him in danger of sinning in many circum-

stances. Thus we see that this principle, if logically carried out, would result in granting nothing to nature, in making life a burden, and God a tyrant.

This Jansenist principle of terrorism will explain Pascal's famous argument in favor of the existence of God. It is only necessary to apply this interpretation of the moral order to the philosophic and religious order.

Is there a God, or is there not? Which of these two opinions is the more probable? If we consider only the probability, properly so called, that is to say, the number and the weight of the arguments, Pascal does not hesitate to say that there are no more reasons for one opinion than for the other. He would stake the question of the existence of God on a throw of the dice: perhaps even, since he delights in extremes, he would go so far as to say that the existence of God is the least probable of the two hypotheses.

But if in this case the affirmative opinion is the least probable, it is very much safer. In truth, if one believes that God exists, or at least if one acts as though one believed it (which means the same thing with Pascal), one risks nothing even if God does not exist. On the contrary, by believing that God does not exist, one risks every thing in case he does exist. If, then, one should always adopt the safest opinion, even when it is less probable, one should believe in God, which is safer, whatever may be the logical probability of the opinion.

The reason why Pascal's argument has not been thoroughly understood is, that it has been regarded merely as a calculation of logical probabilities, the risks or chances counting as elements in this probability, while these two elements should be distinguished, the probability, or the number of reasons, being placed on one side, and safety, or the risks and chances, on the other. This distinction was familiar to all the theologians of his day. If the principle be admitted, the conclusions are logically deduced.

One might, however, dispute these two propositions; viz.,

that, in believing in God, one risks nothing in case he does not exist, and that, in not believing in him, one risks every thing in case he does exist.

In answer to the first assertion, we may say with M. E. Havet, that, if God does not exist, my life and my happiness in this world become my all, and to sacrifice these is an infinite loss.[1]

In answer to the second assertion, we may say that a good and just God could not punish any one for not having believed in him, if his existence were less probable than his non-existence, as the hypothesis makes it.

But Pascal would not assent to either of these objections.

To the first objection he would answer, that man is miserable, whether there is, or is not, any God. The pleasures of life are nothing; reason is powerless and worthless in any case; hence we have nothing to lose. In truth, one does not need to be a devotee in order to recognize the vanity of human things. The author of *Ecclesiastes* was, perhaps, not a devotee: he seems rather to have been an Epicurean, *blasé*, and disgusted with every thing. Lucretius has often been compared with Pascal. Among modern writers, Obermann is as melancholy as René. Sainte-Beuve ended his *History of Port-Royal* with the words that it was "only a special illusion in the midst of infinite illusion." The atheist Schopenhauer teaches the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvâna. Thus Pascal is authorized to say that life is nothing, and that in sacrificing it, with reason thrown in, one does not lose very much. From the stand-point of good common sense, that of Voltaire for instance, Pascal's thesis is of no great value; but in the view of a profound philosophy, sceptical as well as mystic, it is very reasonable.

As to the second objection, it would give him no more trouble than the first. From the Jansenist point of view, in fact, error, even if honest, is punishable, as we have

[1] *Pensées de Pascal*, published by E. Havet. See the very remarkable commentary upon this celebrated passage.

already seen. We are to be judged according to the truth as it is in itself, not as it has appeared to us. Pascal, accepting the Jansenist ideas upon this point, would necessarily believe that God would condemn all those who had denied him, even though they had not had sufficient light to know him.

Granting all this, Pascal's argument is, nevertheless, insensate; but it contains no logical flaw.

It may be said that Pascal did not know all these scholastic distinctions: this is quite probable, for he had a horror of scholasticism. But he had talked a great deal with his theological friends, and become impregnated with their principles while disengaging these from the scholastic forms; and it was not necessary to tell him a great deal for him to deduce suddenly from it the most unexpected consequences.

He himself, in practical life, carried tutiorism to its most extreme and odious results. For instance, let the following question be propounded in an abstract form: Is it permissible to have affection for a sister who loves you tenderly, and cares for you devotedly in your last illness? No one could hesitate to reply that the affirmative is very probable, *probabilissima*. But, on the other hand, every temporal affection draws us away from God, in proportion as we yield to it. It is always to be feared that one may go too far, and may fall into sin. The *safest* (*tutius*) course will, then, be, to refuse under such circumstances to give to a sister the slightest proof of affection, and even to guard against nature by treating her rudely and harshly. This is what Pascal did. He who so strictly carried out the most extravagant logical results of the principle of tutiorism,[1] might easily draw from it, combining it with the calculation of probabilities, the famous wager with which we are familiar.

[1] We should not confound with tutiorism the principle, accepted both by common sense and by orthodoxy, viz., *in dubiis tutius*. But this rule is applicable only when there is an equilibrium between the two opinions, not when one of the two is infinitely more probable than the other.

It should be added, that, to Pascal's mind, this question was not simply a speculative problem to be solved, but a highly practical question, or rather, a *line of conduct to be chosen*, a *part to be taken;* and consequently he was justified in applying, even to the question of God's existence, the Jansenist rule that one should always choose the safer opinion.

Whatever may be thought of Pascal's argument, I may sum up by saying, that, in the debate as to probabilism, the right and wrong seem to me very nearly equally divided between the Jansenists and the Jesuits; for, if the latter have allowed themselves to fall into condemnable laxity, the former have no less weakened the essence of the moral sentiment by substituting the principle of terror for the principle of conscience and of reason. Their errors are of a more noble character, because they are more austere; but they turned back from Christianity to Judaism, and they changed a law of liberty and of love into a law of slavery and of fear.

CHAPTER IV.

UNIVERSALITY OF MORAL PRINCIPLES.

NOTHING is more embarrassing to the moralist than the diversity, the variability, and the contradiction, found among human opinions and manners. Sceptics have taken advantage of this as an argument against the doctrine of an absolute morality: dogmatists persist, in spite of appearances, in maintaining that such a morality does exist. The former see, in what is called morality, only the complex result of the numerous and varying habits, interests, and instincts of the various races of men: the latter affirm the existence of a natural moral law, unwritten, more or less fully known to all men, more or less modified by their inclinations and interests, but everywhere, with an irresistible authority, commanding them to do good, and forbidding them to do evil. There is the same conflict as to the doctrine of rights. The sceptical school, sustained in this by the historical school, and even by that of tradition, maintains that this, like morality, is merely the result of facts, of necessities, of circumstances, and of customs. The philosophical and rationalistic school maintains, on the contrary, that there is a natural, eternal, and imprescriptible right, anterior and superior to all written laws, and on which the latter must be based in order that they may be just. This debate is not without importance, even in politics: it may even be said to be at the root of all the great political contests of our century.

Let us confine our attention to the question of morality. Montaigne was the first among modern writers to develop

in all its force the sceptical argument against moral science.[1] Every one knows his admirable chapter on Raymond de Sebonde — a truly inexhaustible arsenal of arguments and objections against human reason. Our modern sceptics have needed only to draw copiously from this source.

"They are very amusing [he says], when, to give some certainty to the laws, they say that there are some fixed, perpetual, immutable laws which they call natural, which are implanted in the minds of men by their very nature; and, of these, some say there are three, some four, some more, some less. Now, they are so unfortunate, that, of these three or four selected laws, there is not one which has not been contradicted and disavowed, not only by one nation, but by several. . . . Nothing in the world varies so greatly as law and custom. A thing is called abominable in one place, and in another is praised; as, in Lacedæmonia, clever thieving was admired. Marriages between near relatives are strictly forbidden among us: elsewhere they are regarded as honorable. Murder, parricide, sexual intercourse, traffic in stolen goods, licentiousness of every sort, — there is no extreme which has not been accepted by some nation as common custom."[2]

Yet this same Montaigne, who delighted in this kind of contradiction, has elsewhere written these noble words, which condemn the preceding lines: "The laws of natural and universal justice, as it is in the abstract, are very different from those of our special, national, police justice, determined by necessity, and are far nobler than these."[3]

Pascal, as every one knows, has also taken up this thesis of Montaigne's, and has almost borrowed his very words, adding in that proud, bold, and contemptuous tone which he always uses, and which is almost his mark —

"If men understood what justice is, they would never have formed that maxim, the most generally current of all; 'Let every one follow the customs of his country.' The glory of true equity would have subdued all nations; and legislators would not have taken for models the caprices of Persians and Germans, instead of this eternal justice. We should

[1] In old times, Carneades made use of this same argument. See Cicero, *De Republica*.

[2] Montaigne, *Essais*, 1, ii., c. xii.

[3] Montaigne, *Essais*, 1, iii., c. i.

have seen it established among all the nations of the earth, and in all ages; whereas now there is hardly any idea of justice or injustice which does not change with the climate. Three degrees of latitude reverse all jurisprudence. The meridian decides the truth. Right has its epochs. The entrance of Saturn into the sign of the lion marks the origin of a certain crime. Wonderful justice which is bounded by a river! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on that!"[1]

The contemporaneous materialistic school could not fail to avail itself of this sort of common bond of union; and, in developing this, it has made use of the testimony of the most recent travellers. According to Dr. Buchner, savage nations are destitute of any moral character, and commit the most atrociously cruel actions without any remorse. They have little, if any, idea of the rights of property. According to Capt. Montravel, the inhabitants of New Caledonia divide every thing they have with every new-comer.[2] Theft, assassination, revenge, are every-day matters with them. In the Indies, there is a terrible association — that of the Thugs — with whom assassination is a religious practice. The Damaras, a tribe in Southern Africa, have no idea what incest is. According to Buchner, the negroes in the Soudan not only excuse fraud, theft, and murder, but even regard these acts as quite estimable. Falsehood and deceit seem to them the triumph of intellectual superiority over stupidity. The captain says that the Somalis (on the Gulf of Aden) prefer a well-managed fraud to any other means of gaining a support. Among the Tidichees, murder is regarded as a glorious action. Werner-Munzig (*The Laws and Customs of the Bogas*) says, that, among these tribes, revenge, dissimulation of hatred until the favorable moment for vengeance, politeness, pride,

[1] *Pensées de Pascal*, ed. Havet, p. 37. But Pascal himself does not utterly deny the existence of natural laws, for he adds; "Undoubtedly there are natural laws; but this noble reason, itself corrupted, has corrupted every thing." In other words, original sin has spoiled every thing. Very good; but the materialistic school adopts the argument as adapted to its own purposes, and leaves out the corrective.

[2] This is a rather singular example to be chosen as a proof of the immorality of savages.

indolence, contempt for labor, generosity, hospitality, love of show, and prudence, are the characteristics of a virtuous man. Waitz (*Anthropology of Nations in a State of Nature*) says that a certain savage, when questioned as to the difference between good and evil, replied; "Good is when we carry off other people's wives: evil is when they carry off ours." The negroes in Cuba, according to the Count de Goertz (*Voyage around the World*), are of the vilest character, and have no moral sentiments. A bestial instinct or a shrewd cunning are the only motives of their actions. They regard as weakness the generosity and kindness of the whites. Nothing but force makes any impression upon them: the whip is the only efficacious means of punishment. . . . They eat like wild beasts. Another person says —

"I have often endeavored to gain some insight into the souls of the negroes. It was always lost trouble. It is clear that the negro is endowed with little intelligence, and that all his thoughts and his actions bear the stamp of the lowest degree of human development." [1]

Following the development of the sceptical argument, from the time of Carneades and Montaigne to our own days, we shall see, that, while it has not changed much in substance, the details have been amplified. The facts and examples quoted are much more numerous, and experience daily adds to them. To use the language of the schools, the major term remains the same; but the minor has become a vast battle-field, which grows larger from day to day. In a word, M. Littré tells us that the problem has entered upon its *positive phase*. Instead of confining themselves to two or three constantly reiterated assertions, they now begin to quote the results of a science which is indeed new, and still somewhat hypothetical, but which is gradually developing — the science of *anthropology*. On the other hand, the history of

[1] Dr. Buchner forgets to tell us the name of the author who has endeavored to gain an insight into the souls of the negroes, and has seen such hideous things. Consult on this same question the recent work by Lubbock, *Origin of Civilization*.

moral, religious, and philosophical ideas has made great progress in our days. We may, then, hope that it will soon be possible to discuss, in a truly scientific manner, this serious question. I shall make use of these various sources in the following discussion.

The sceptical argument against the moral unity of the human race may be summed up in two propositions: among savage nations, there is no morality; among civilized nations, the morality is contradictory. We will examine successively these two points. When we consider the customs of savage tribes, which have no history and no written memorials, the only authority at command for attaining any result is that of travellers. Without desiring to depreciate this authority, which is one of the necessary foundations of anthropological science, it will be wise and prudent not to trust to it implicitly and unreservedly. While philosophy needs to borrow its materials from the natural sciences, it has both the right and the duty to use them with discernment; and although it cannot decide without facts, yet the ultimate interpretation of the facts belongs to it.

I. In the first place, it is well known to those who have read many accounts of travels, that the observation of morals is not generally the thing in which travellers are principally interested. Zoölogy, botany, and physical geography find in them earnest, well-prepared, and careful students; and in these matters one may safely trust the writings of travellers: but moral observations always form the most insignificant part of their reports. Add to this, that travellers are generally prepared for observations in the physical sciences, the extensive knowledge, but very few of them have the ... and does logical knowledge necessary for good observations of t... civilized or even for understanding clearly what they should ... beasts? Thus, in this matter, they adopt a sort of empiric... influences no fixed and sure method, very much like that whi...

be followed by a man who should attempt to describe the *flora* and *fauna* of the countries visited by him, while ignorant of natural history, or knowing only its elements. Travellers set out with fixed programmes, with well-formulated scientific problems, in regard to all the physical conditions of the country which they are to traverse. But has any traveller ever set out, with a well-arranged programme, to study with precision and in detail the differences and points of resemblance between primitive and civilized peoples, from the stand-point of morality and religion?

Starting in such a mental attitude, is it not certain that the attention of travellers will be attracted by differences rather than by analogies? Few ever think of noting what there is in common between inferior and superior races, for these analogies seem so natural that it appears to be unnecessary to mention them. If one sees a mother caress her child, he will take good care not to mention that; for he would be told that there was no need to go so far to see such a sight. To make his travels interesting, it is necessary that he should tell of extraordinary things; and, especially in morals, his attention will be attracted by monstrosities. Add to this the difficulty of ascertaining the moral condition of these people, who cannot analyze themselves, who have few, if any, abstract ideas, and whose language is incapable of expressing such ideas.

"For instance [says M. de Quatrefages quite justly], the Australian languages have no words by which to translate *honesty*, *justice*, *sin*, *crime*; but this is merely due to the poverty of their language, and is the same in physical as in moral matters. In the same languages, there is no generic word, such as *tree*, *bird*, *fish*; and some persons have concluded from the that the Australians make no distinction between those objects."

what

science ust also be remarked, that the observation of the of a country can rarely be made impartially by a This is true, even of civilized countries,[1] and yet

[1] Dr. B. to gain an i things. Co stance, in his original and clever book, *Die Familie*, a German *of Civilizatio* Riehl, states, as a notorious fact, that the French have no idea of

more so of savage nations. People are always more struck and annoyed by the differences in customs, which are at once apparent, than by the analogies, which are seen only after a long time, and after a growing familiarity. For instance, try to make a German or an Englishman understand that the city of Paris is not wholly devoted to the pursuit of pleasure; that there exists in it family life, gravity, serious manners: you will not succeed. If such errors are possible in regard to a country like France, how will it be when the population of the Soudan or of Polynesia is in question?

Moreover, among these primitive peoples a stranger is almost always regarded as an enemy; and this hostile disposition is not always the result of ferocity, but often of a very natural and even proper suspicion. As it is difficult for them to comprehend disinterested scientific curiosity, they naturally regard the stranger as a spy, one who is contriving plots against them; and most certainly the conduct of the whites toward savage tribes has generally given but too good reason for the suspicion everywhere felt. But, this, the stranger is an enemy, what can be more natural than

It persecutions, the barbarity, the oppression, of which he customs victim? Only, it may be inquired whether he is in stranger est position for observing the customs of those who t any moment put him to death.

[1] For in us there are many things which may diminish, to a author, Mr family life. n extent, the value of the testimony of travellers, this seems too unfavorable to savage tribes. It is the with conquering races, which, when brought into con- ith inferior ones, are always more or less inclined to regard them as wild beasts, and to treat them as such. The red-skins are, in fact, wild beasts, toward their neighbors, the whites; but how could they be any thing else? And does not a war which lasts a long time, even if between civilized nations, always end by transforming men into wild beasts? However this may be, testimony given under such influences

of hatred and contempt, has little resemblance to scientific observations.

Moreover, in citing facts to prove that there is no morality among savages, two very distinct kinds of facts are confounded — customs and opinions. If bad customs exist among a people, must we necessarily conclude that they have no ideas of morality? No, but that they do not obey them. Among some nations we find incredible wickednesses. Does the fault lie in their moral ideas? No, but only in their passions. A country in Europe is celebrated, justly or unjustly, for the laxity of its morals. Must we believe, that, in that country, libertinism and adultery are regarded as more legitimate than elsewhere; that purity is blamed and condemned by their standard of morals? Not at all: this nation has a lesser degree of practical morality than others; that is all. It is with nations as with individuals: they are more or less honest, more or less moral, more or less vicious. But since there are vicious individuals who even lose consciousness of their vices, must we therefore conclude that there is no difference between good and evil? Here one should appeal only to those universal facts which are common to a whole country, to a whole century; which are accepted by the government, by religion, by the public conscience. This distinction is not always made. People speak of the Chinese giving their children to swine, to be eaten by them; but, even if this be true (and it seems to be very doubtful),[1] what does it prove but a great perversion of natural feelings in that country, caused, no doubt, by extreme misery? Let them show us a law which com-

[1] The Rev. Mr. Milne, an Englishman who lived for twenty years in China, residing in the interior, and being familiar with Chinese manners, and who also travelled a great deal in that country, affirms, that, during all this time, he never saw nor heard of a single instance of this barbarous practice. He conjectures that such a thing may have been done during some period of famine, and that a general law was fabricated out of what was really an odious exception. How many prejudices of this sort disappear when the facts are carefully examined! Livingstone tells us, that in Africa, the country of

mands, or even permits, this atrocity. Let them show a single passage from Confucius or Mencius which advises parents, when in distress, to get rid of their children in this way. This would be an argument against the universality of the moral law, but the mere fact proves nothing. Locke himself admits this:

"Perhaps it will be objected [he says], that it is no argument that the *rule is not known because it is broken*. I grant the objection good, where men, though they transgress, yet disown not the law. . . . But it is impossible to conceive that a *whole nation* of men should all *publicly reject* and renounce what every one of them, certainly and infallibly, knew to be a law."[1]

Very well: then, when we cite any custom of the savages, we must carefully examine whether it is a corruption, more or less general, but not sanctioned, or whether it is a publicly accepted principle. Thus, for instance, duelling is unquestionably a savage custom, which has had many victims in modern times; yet it has always been condemned by moralists and by religion, and the laws have done every thing in their power to prevent it. Even those who obey its melancholy code are the first to admit, that, except in a very small number of cases for which no other mode of obtaining justice suffices, this custom is as absurd as it is odious.[2]

In other cases it must be observed that the very fact that the act in question is prescribed and regulated by the law, takes from it the significance which it would have were it the result of a universal and spontaneous practice. For instance, larceny was permitted in Sparta: must we conclude from this, that in Sparta there was no idea of the rights

the negroes, he never knew a single instance of parents selling their children. And yet we are constantly told that this is very common, and it is therefore concluded that these poor creatures have no idea of family affection. Thus philosophy is made the dupe of slave-dealers.

[1] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book i., chap. iii., § xi.

[2] I will add that the custom of duelling has retained its hold so long, only because it contains some elements of nobility — death faced with courage, the sentiment of honor, which no positive law could defend so efficaciously, etc.

of property? The contrary is clear; for larceny could have been permitted, only where rights of property existed and were recognized. Does it follow from this custom that theft in general would be considered legitimate? Not at all: for it is clear, that in this case larceny, being permitted by the mutual consent of the thief and the citizens, would lose the character of robbery; for, if I agree that you may take something from me, it is plain that you do not steal it. The Spartans, to train the citizens to skill in war, permitted this kind of game, which was undoubtedly subject to definite rules. It would be equally correct to say, that in Rome no distinction between master and slave was recognized, because during the Saturnalia the relation between them was reversed.

We must also leave out of the debate all those customs, manners, and laws, in which different peoples differ, on account of their geographical situation, the climate, their temperaments, etc., and which have no connection with morality. Morality does not require that all individuals shall be exactly alike: neither does it require the identity of all races and peoples. Since nature never made two individuals exactly alike, since such absolute similitude would even, according to Leïbnitz, be impossible, moral laws cannot require what the nature of things renders impossible. Hence, under the same moral law, each one could have his own private character, his manner of life, his temperament, his habits, and his pleasures. Why should it not be the same with different peoples? Morality does not forbid me to be cheerful, nor my neighbor to be grave and melancholy. So there are also peoples which have a light, bright, cheerful imagination, loving pleasure, festivals, and dances — in a word, loving the joys of life. Other peoples are harsh, grave, ardent workers, loving austerity. These last treat the former as frivolous: the others in their turn regard these as barbarians. The wise man will see that these differing qualities are legitimate, and produce a happy diversity

in the human species. He will require that a people shall not be too ready to forsake their primitive and original ways. From this natural diversity of characters and tastes, as well as from the diversity of climates, and of what is now called the environment, there arise among different peoples different habits, customs, and laws, which find here their explanation, and the reason for their existence. In this sense nothing can be more reasonable than that maxim which so horrified Pascal: "Let each follow the customs of his country," the corollary of which, well known to travellers, is, that each should follow the customs of the foreign country which he visits. This maxim is in no way opposed to morality: it is even a moral maxim, for nothing could be more unjust than to offend the sensibilities of those from whom one receives hospitality; and it is certainly wise, if not obligatory, to live like other men, at least so far as this involves nothing wrong. The idea of an absolute uniformity of manners among all the nations in the world, is an abstract conception, like that of a universal language. Morality does not require that all men should speak one language: neither does it require that they should all dress, eat, amuse themselves and govern themselves, in the same way. Much must be left to nature. The error of certain philosophers, which is shared also by Montaigne and by Pascal, is, that they believe that all differences result from caprice and fantasy; but diversity, as well as unity, is the daughter of nature. Plants change their aspect, their bearing, their color, according to the climate in which they live. Why should it be otherwise with humanity?

It is easy, as we have seen, to explain why the accounts furnished us of the customs of inferior races are generally unfavorable, and seem to indicate the results already stated. Yet a more attentive study of the accounts given by travellers would, I think, make the balance even, and would show us that good and evil are mingled among all peoples as they are in our own. I do not doubt that an impartial

examination would prove that the moral ideas of savage or semi-civilized peoples are superior to those which are generally attributed to them. Here I can only indicate some points in the picture which is yet to be made. This sketch, drawn lightly from casual reading, may indicate what would be the result of stricter and more systematic study.

The population of the Soudan and of Senegambia is not composed of what can properly be called savage tribes. They occupy an intermediate position between the savage and the civilized conditions. They are agricultural and commercial, which is one step toward civilization; they have a tolerable police; finally, their relations with the Arabs and the Moors have given them a sort of religious, and even intellectual, culture. Yet they belong to the black race — that race, destitute, as we are told, of all moral sentiments, and hardly higher than the brutes, as is claimed by those who have seen it only in a state of slavery. This is not the opinion of those who have studied it in its native country: we have, in regard to this, the testimony of two of the most distinguished travellers of modern times — Mungo Park and Dr. Livingstone. The former observed the negro race in its highest stage of development; the latter, on the contrary, at a very inferior stage of civilization, hardly raised at all above the state of nature. Both agree that the black race has been calumniated, and that this has been done in the interest of a plague-spot and a leprosy which is the chief cause of the very degradation alleged in its justification.

No accusation against the negroes is more frequent and wide-spread than that of indolence. For a long time this was the favorite argument of the defenders of slavery, as it still is of those who lament its abolition. Mungo Park has written in contradiction of this reproach. He says that the nature of the climate is undoubtedly unfavorable to great exertions; but can we call a people indolent when they live, not upon the spontaneous productions of the soil, but upon those which they wrest from it by cultivation? Very few

people work more energetically, when it is necessary, than do the Mandingo;[1] but, as they have no occasion to make merchandise of the superfluous products of their labor, they are satisfied with cultivating as much land as is necessary for their maintenance.[2] In his interesting abridgment of the discoveries made in the region of the Niger and Central Africa, M. de Lanoye[3] cites several remarkable instances of the energy and activity of the negroes. Each year, for instance, bands of negroes descend from the interior of Africa to the European settlements in Senegambia, labor energetically in cultivating ground-nuts, then, when the harvest is over, carry the product back to their families, two or three hundred leagues distant, and return the following year. Others engage as pilots for the coast, and, after a few years of tremendous toil, return home to live at their ease. Such is the idleness of the negroes when they have not been imbruted by slavery.

Another tendency of which semi-savage peoples have been most frequently accused, is that to theft. Mungo Park, in spite of his sympathy for these people, is obliged to confess that his black friends had an irresistible desire to steal from him every thing he possessed. But he adds;

"For this part of their conduct, no complete justification can be offered; because *theft is a crime in their own estimation;* and it must be observed that they are not generally and habitually guilty of it toward each other."

I believe

Thus, among these thieving peoples, theft is a crime: only, they are unable to resist temptation. Does not the same thing sometimes happen in civilized countries?

As to the pillage and exactions to which travellers are subjected, not merely by individuals, but also by governments, by the princes, the little potentates, whose states they

[1] One of the great subdivisions of the negro race. They are also called the Malinka.

[2] Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior of Africa.* [3] *Le Niger*, 1858.

have had the hardihood to visit, a reflection has frequently occurred to me which seems calculated to moderate our disapproval. If we are to believe one of our travellers, hardly has he set foot in one of these barbarous countries when he is deprived of almost all his possessions; nevertheless, he goes on; a new sovereign appears; again he is pillaged, and this continues during the whole journey. One asks by what miracle his baggage, a thousand times stolen, continually renews itself, so that it makes fresh exactions possible; and one is tempted to conclude that the traveller may have been plundered, or even, to use such an expression, skinned a little, but not absolutely stripped of every thing, as would be the case if these people had no idea of the rights of property, and no respect whatever for them.[1]

Mungo Park speaks of certain qualities of heart, some noble and exalted, others refined and delicate, which exist among these same tribes. The Feloops, as he calls them, are violent and vindictive; but they are also very grateful, showing great affection for their benefactors; and they restore with admirable fidelity whatever is intrusted to them. The Mandingo, on the contrary, are gentle, hospitable, and kind. Mungo Park bears especial testimony to the women, and he gives numerous and touching proofs of their sensibility and pity. "I do not recollect," he says, "a single instance of hard-heartedness towards me in the women." On this point he confirms the testimony of one of his predecessors, Ledyard, who said —

"To a woman, I never addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. . . . In so free and kind a manner did they contribute to my relief, that, if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught, and if hungry I ate the coarsest morsel with a double relish."

[1] Suppose our custom-house duties to be levied, without law or regulation, by an arbitrary government, and we shall have the correct conception of these exactions from the stranger, which are hateful, indeed, but from which we cannot justly conclude that the powers which make them are ignorant of the distinction between mine and thine.

These were, nevertheless, negresses: could one speak with more emotion and more sympathy of our most charming Europeans? Even the poor slaves, led in chains to the coast, whose caravan was accompanied by Mungo Park, forgot their own sufferings, and strove to lessen his. He says that they often came with water to quench his thirst, and collected leaves to make him a bed when the caravan slept in the open air.

What Mungo Park admires particularly in the Mandingo are their domestic virtues and sentiments. In spite of polygamy, the women are not held in slavery: their husbands allow them a great deal of liberty, which they never abuse. "I believe," says Mungo Park, "that instances of conjugal infidelity are not common." Maternal tenderness is especially strong among this people. Mungo Park cites a very simple, but touching, instance, which he witnessed himself. One of his travelling companions was a smith, who, having laid up some money by working on the coast, was returning to his native village to remain there.

"The blacksmith's aged mother was led forth, leaning upon a staff. Every one made way for her, and she stretched out her hand to bid her son welcome. Being totally blind, she stroked his hands, arms, and face, with great care, and seemed highly delighted that her latter days were blessed by his return, and that her ears once more heard the music of his voice. From this interview I was fully convinced, that whatever difference there is between the Negro and the European in the conformation of the nose and the color of the skin, there is none in the genuine sympathies and characteristic feelings of our common nature."[1]

Maternal tenderness produces filial affection. One of the sayings most frequently heard is this: "Strike me, but do not curse my mother." The greatest affront that can be offered to a negro is to speak contemptuously of his mother. Mungo Park relates, that, having lost his way, he received hospitality in a hut. While he lay upon a mat, the mistress of the house, and her maid-servants, improvised a song, which

[1] Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, p. 122.

had for its theme the unfortunate stranger. It was this: "The winds roared and the rain fell. The poor white man, faint and weary, came to rest under our tree. He has no mother to bring him milk, no wife to grind him corn." And in chorus all chanted, "Let us pity the white man: *no mother has he.*"[1]

The negroes are not incapable of the noblest and most exalted virtues. This race, which is represented to us as deceitful (and it becomes so in slavery), esteems nothing more highly than veracity. A mother lost her son in battle. She followed his corpse, sobbing, and crying out, "He never, *never told a lie!*" Can any thing be more beautiful than this maternal cry, which is not the animal regret of the lioness or the wolf whose cubs have been slain, but is a truly moral lamentation? She regretted, not merely her son, but mourned because of his soul and his virtue!

Let us close the testimony of Mungo Park with a legend or historical tale,[2] which shows that the black races, even those which have rejected Mahometanism, are capable of raising themselves to the highest moral stand-point. A Moorish sovereign attempted to force one of the negro kings, named Damel, to accept the Mahometan religion. This caused a war between the two princes, in which the negro was victorious. His enemy was brought before him in chains.

"'Abd-ul-Kader, answer me this question. If the chance of war had placed me in your situation, and you in mine, how would you have treated me?'—'I would have thrust my spear into your heart,' returned Abd-ul-Kader with great firmness; 'and I know that a similar fate awaits me.'—'Not so,' said Damel: 'my spear is indeed red with the blood of your subjects, killed in battle; and I could now give it a deeper stain by dipping it in your own; but this would not build up my towns, nor bring to life the thousands who fell in the war. I will not, there-

[1] Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, p. 296.

[2] Mungo Park affirms that this story was related to him as an historical, and even a recent, fact. But, if merely a legend, it would prove a high stand-point of morality.

fore, kill you in cold blood, but I will retain you as my slave, until I perceive that your presence in your own kingdom will be no longer dangerous to your neighbors, and then I will consider of the proper way of disposing of you.' Abd-ul-Kader was accordingly retained, and worked as a slave, for three months, at the end of which period Damel . . . restored to them their king."

This act ot clemency was undoubtedly related to Mungo Park as a surprising fact; but is not the clemency of Augustus celebrated among us as a marvellous thing? And is the pardoning of offences a virtue which is very commonly practised, even by Christians?

The tribes visited by Dr. Livingstone, in the south of Africa, are very much below the inhabitants of the Soudan in point of civilization and intelligence. Yet the accounts given by this distinguished traveller leave much the same impression as the recitals of Mungo Park, which is, that the negro races, seen in their native country, are infinitely superior to the same races when reduced to slavery.[1] Finally, although they are much nearer the state of nature, the moral ideas of these southern races do not differ essentially from those of civilized nations.

"On questioning intelligent men among the Bakwains [says Livingstone] as to their former knowledge of good and evil, . . . they profess that nothing we indicate as sin ever appeared to them as otherwise, except the statement that it was wrong to have more than one wife."

The manner in which justice is administered among the Makololo deserves mention as a remarkable confirmation of what Cicero says in regard to natural law, which is not one thing at Rome, and another at Athens, but which we all learn from Nature herself. It is only in the case of political

[1] I do not know upon what authority Dr. Broca maintains that the American negro is superior to the African negro. Undoubtedly no one could be more degraded than the black inhabitants of the coast of Guinea; but how can any one say that the race which has founded the great empires of the Soudan is inferior to the servile race in Cuba, or in the southern part of the United States of America?

offences that justice among the Makololo employs summary methods,[1] says Livingstone.

"In common cases there is a greater show of deliberation. The complainant asks the man against whom he means to lodge his complaint to come with him to the chief. This is never refused. When both are in the *kotla*, the complainant stands up and states the whole case before the chief and the people usually assembled there. He stands a few seconds after he has done this, to recollect if he has forgotten any thing. The witnesses to whom he has referred then rise up and tell all they themselves have heard and seen, but not any thing that they have heard from others. The defendant, after allowing some minutes to elapse, . . . in the most quiet, deliberate way he can assume, . . . begins to explain the affair. . . . Sometimes, when galled by his remarks, the complainant utters a sentence of dissent: the accused turns quietly to him, and says; 'Be silent; I sat still while you were speaking: can't you do the same? Do you want to have it all to yourself?'[2] And, as the audience acquiesce, . . . he goes on till he has finished all he has to say in his defence. If he has any witnesses to the truth of the facts of his defence, they give their evidence. No oath is administered; but occasionally, when a statement is questioned, a man will say, 'By my father,' or, 'By the chief, it is so.'"

They are also (still on Livingstone's authority) remarkably faithful. He says, that when he was at Cassange, a Portuguese city, the men who had accompanied him, and who were Makololo, came before him for him to settle a dispute which had arisen among them.

"Several Portuguese, who had been viewing the proceedings with great interest, complimented me on the success of my teaching them how to act in litigation; but I could not take any credit to myself for the system which I had found ready made to my hands."[3]

Livingstone, like Mungo Park, bears testimony to the kindly nature of the negro matrons. "The Makololo *ladies* are liberal in their presents of milk and other food," and

[1] Livingstone, *Travels and Researches in South Africa.*

[2] Do we not seem to be listening to our own deputies?

[3] Livingstone, *Travels and Researches in South Africa*, pp. 201, 202.

exact but little labor from their slaves. At a time when the Bakwains were suffering from great scarcity of food, the conduct of the women was admirable. They parted with their ornaments to buy grain from more fortunate tribes. Their maternal affection is very strong; and I have already remarked, that Livingstone, during his long residence among them, never saw a single instance of parents selling their children into slavery, which we have nevertheless been told is a common practice.

Livingstone concludes his remarks on the customs of the Makololo with these words: —

"After long observation, I came to the conclusion that they are just such a strange mixture of good and evil as men are everywhere else. . . . There are frequent instances of genuine kindness and liberality. . . . The rich show kindness to the poor in expectation of services; and a poor person who has no relatives will seldom be supplied even with water in illness, and, when dead, will be dragged out to be devoured by the hyenas instead of being buried. . . . On the other hand, I have seen instances in which both men and women have taken up little orphans and carefully reared them as their own children. By a selection of cases of either kind, it would not be difficult to make these people appear excessively good or uncommonly bad."

Is this nature which Livingstone describes that of the savage only, and not of all mankind?

Besides the negro races, the Australian tribes have been favored by being classed as equal with the brutes, in order to glorify the theory which makes man only a transformed monkey. It has been said, that there was no such thing as family life among them: the easy compliance of the women, the indifference of the husbands, have been dwelt upon. But M. de Quatrefages very justly remarks that these instances have all been taken from the tribes living in Sydney — tribes which have been corrupted by civilization, as has too often happened, both in Australia and elsewhere. It is not the same in other parts of the country; and Dawson draws a truly patriarchal picture of the Australian family, in which

the wife plays a very important part. They have been called a nomadic people, wandering about in groups composed of two or three families, without any trace of social organization. Other travellers, however, have found among them a division into clans, and even numerous villages, themselves subdivided into tribes and families. They have no idea of the rights of property, it is said; but yet it is found that each tribe has its own territory, and even each family has its own lands. Vices are imputed to them which are quite as frequent among civilized people as among savages — revenge, drunkenness, licentiousness. But, according to other travellers, the Australian is susceptible of the tenderest and noblest feelings, family affection, conjugal love, and gratitude. Cheated by a white man, he no longer trusts him, and indulges in reprisals; but Dawson affirms that he acts with perfect good faith toward those who have deserved his confidence. Cunningham found, that, among these people, points of honor are sanctioned by genuine duels, in which every thing is done acccording to rules which cannot be disregarded without disgrace. Notice, for instance, a curious fact which M. de Quatrefages reports on the authority of Capt. Stuart, and which proves the chivalric spirit of those savages. Two Irish refugees got into a quarrel with the natives, with whom they had taken refuge. The Europeans were unarmed. Before attacking them, the Australians furnished them weapons with which to defend themselves, after which they fought with and killed them.[1]

The Indians of the New World have never been placed so low in the scale as the negroes and Australians. Most people have recognized in them, though mingled with ferocity and perfidy, nobler and more manly qualities than are attributed

[1] As a shadow to this picture, it must be added that the Irishmen were then eaten, which is not very chivalric. But this, M. de Quatrefages tells us, was an exceptional case; for it has been judicially affirmed after investigation, that cannibalism is practised in only a few places, scattered over the continent of Australia, and that there is no trace of it throughout an extensive territory and among numerous tribes

to the African tribes. A certain pride, and even dignity, have been traditionally ascribed to them. Certainly the red-skins are not to be judged from Cooper's romances; but, after all, he has not idealized them any more than Corneille did the Romans. In the *Mémoires* of Malouet,[1] recently published, I find a very interesting and clear description of the habits of the Indians of Guiana. We have not here, indeed, the warlike Apaches, the proud Mohicans, the Hurons, the Iroquois, those energetic and heroic tribes, reduced little by little, through want and the constant advance of the Europeans, to the condition of pillagers, living only by brigandage. They are gentle and peaceful tribes, sedentary in their habits, softened, if not conquered, by civilization. The picture which Malouet gives us of their social condition, which seems to be perfectly correct, proves that all these undeveloped peoples have not chosen the worst lot of all which man can enjoy upon the earth.

"From Hudson's Bay to the Straits of Magellan [says Malouet], these men, so different in temperament, in features, in character, some gentle, others fierce, all agree in one thing — love for a savage life, and resistance to civilization."

Do you call this a proof of the essential diversity of races? So be it; doubtless races have differing instincts; but civilization and morality are two widely different things.

"Nothing is more striking to a European [says Malouet] than their indifference, their aversion even, to our arts, our luxury, and our enjoyments: . . . we have brought them into our cities to show them our happiness; they were not attracted by it; . . . our luxury, our houses, our jewels, our clothing, our food, none of these things tempted them; our despotic or servile police terrified them. A European governor or magistrate occupied in administering the details of civilized life seemed to them a sultan, and we a troop of slaves.[2] Their chief passion is a love of independence, the distinctive characteristic of all living beings."

[1] These extremely interesting *Mémoires* have just been very carefully edited by the grandson of the author, Baron Malouet.

[2] Imagine a magistrate telling an Indian that he must not build his house

I willingly grant that these poor Indians are mistaken; but is it not a noble error to prefer the free and independent life of the forests to the elaborate politeness of our cities? Love of independence is one of the noblest of human passions, and the efforts of our political science are directed toward the discovery of the means by which to reconcile the advantages of civilized life with the rights of natural freedom. Are those who sacrifice the former to the latter so utterly in error?

This independent life of the Indians of Guiana is not, however, the state of nature of which Rousseau and the philosophers of the eighteenth century dreamed.[1]

"They have a social organization; they live in families; they have a national association, a magistrate or chief who represents them in their relations with their neighbors, and who commands them in time of war. They need no civil code, having neither lands nor legal proceedings; but they follow religiously the habits and customs of their ancestors. They have found that equality for which we have sought so painfully: they maintain it without effort. . . . Finally [says Malouet] they are in a *natural* state of society, while we are in its *political* state."[2]

The same observer also tells us that there is less immorality among them than in our large cities. An Indian, unless he is a chief, or has been corrupted, rarely has more than one young wife. When the first grows old, he takes a second,

a single foot farther forward than that of his neighbor; that he must not pick up the game which he has just killed, because it fell on the other side of a hedge or a path, etc. All these complicated results, derived from the principles on which civil life is founded, would certainly appear to him the acts of an absurd and odious despotism. Fenimore Cooper, in his old trapper, has admirably depicted this passion for an independent mode of existence, and the resistance of a child of nature to the encroachments of civil life.

[1] Rousseau himself, whatever may be said, never represented the state of nature as being the happiest one for man. What he greatly prefers, as he says himself, is a mixed state, intermediate between that of nature and that of civilization, after the first arts have been invented, and before the vices of civilization have been developed — in a word, a state precisely like that of the Indians in Guiana, as described by Malouet.

[2] *Mémoires* de Malouet, t. 1, p. 151.

so as to have more children; but their households are peaceable, nevertheless. The law of the division of functions is never violated among them. The husband hunts, fishes, and builds: the wife does the rest. She is submissive without constraint: she pays her husband for his protection by her obedience.

To prolong these details would be to introduce a treatise on anthropology or ethnology, which is not my object. I have said enough to show that savage peoples are not destitute of morality. Good and evil are united in them, as in more enlightened nations; and, if evil prevails over good, this is due rather to ignorance and to suffering than to any alleged radical and essential moral incapacity. If, indeed, we seek to find the principal causes of those immoral customs among savages by which we are horrified, we shall almost always find them to be want and suffering. Cannibalism, for instance, originated in the extreme difficulty of finding a sufficient supply of food in those vast, uncultivated regions whose ignorant inhabitants have hardly any means of subsistence[1] except hunting and fishing; and habit frequently outlasts the necessity which first produced it. The barbarous custom of killing old people when they became infirm, was undoubtedly caused at first by the fear of being obliged to give up to pitiless enemies persons who were beloved, but could no longer be supported. Hatred of enemies, love of revenge, implacable tribal feuds, the massacre of prisoners, — criminal practices, from which civilized nations are not yet entirely free — come from rivalry, and from the struggle for existence in a land which is hardly able to support one, and which must be shared by two, or even by more. As to the absence of modesty and the license of manners, not to mention the fact, that, in these respects, civilized nations themselves are not so far superior to the savages as they imagine,

[1] The finding of savage tribes which are not cannibals (and there are many of these) is quite sufficient proof that a horror of anthropophagy is a natural human instinct, and not an artificial result of civilization.

it may be affirmed that there is no people, however uncivilized, that does not have something more or less like marriage. Everywhere we find some precaution, some rule to govern the relations of the sexes. Finally, if it is true that certain sentiments, certain moral ideas, require civilization and culture for their full development, it must not, therefore, be assumed that these sentiments or these ideas are not natural; for the development and perfecting of all our sentiments is one of the characteristic traits of human nature.

It is claimed, that, among savages, morality is merely the result of instinct or of interest, but that they have no absolute and abstract idea of duty. No matter, for I do not pretend that the savages have reached the utmost height of morality to which man can raise himself: it is enough if they possess the germs of morality.[1] After all, what is the morality of children at first but instinct, habit, and interest? Should we require more of nations in their childhood? I am willing to grant that humanity did not at first have a clearly developed idea of duty: it is enough that it has attained one. Let us now consider the ideas of morality which prevail among civilized nations, and see if it is true that these are so generally contradictory.

[1] This is the opinion of Leibnitz: "It is no great wonder," he says in his *Nouveaux Essais* (chap. xi.), "that men do not always perceive immediately every thing that they possess within themselves, and cannot read at once the characters of the moral law which God has written in their hearts, as St. Paul says. Yet, as morality is more important than arithmetic, God has given men instincts, which at once, without any reasoning, lead them to do some of the things which reason commands. Thus we walk, according to the laws of physics, without thinking of those laws; and we eat, not only because it is necessary, but also, and still more, because it gives us pleasure. Though there may not, perhaps, be any evil practice which has not been authorized somewhere and under some circumstances, *yet there are few which have not been condemned more frequently, and by the greater part of mankind.* Custom, tradition, and law, all have a share in regulating this; but *it is nature which causes custom to take generally the right side in regard to these duties.* Nature also gave rise to the tradition of the existence of God. *Now, nature gives to man, and even to most animals, affection and kindness toward those of the same species.* After this general social instinct, which in man may be termed philanthropy, there come other special affections, such as that between the male

II. Some are surprised to see so great a difference in the opinions and customs of peoples ~~who seem to~~ belong to the same race. But, in my opinion, one should rather be surprised to see how, ~~amid~~ in spite of such great differences in time, place, and material circumstances, man has yet been everywhere so nearly the same. It is only natural that the difference in environment and in physical conditions, together with historical and geographical circumstances, should cause great differences in ways of thinking; but the really ~~wonderful~~ amazing thing seems to be, that these differences are not greater, and that in so many races, different from each other, ~~and without inter-communication,~~ there should be found, after all, a basis of essential morality which is nearly the same with all men, as soon as they have attained a certain degree of civilization. The moral legislators of the Hindoos, the Chinese, the Persians, the Hebrews, and the Greeks, have all formed strikingly similar ideas of human morality; and the more closely we study the civilization of these different peoples, the more clearly we see similitude in diversity, the more numerous we find to be the ideas held in common amid all apparent contradictions.

I will not pause to prove that all the European nations —

and the female, the love of fathers and mothers for their children, ~~which~~ the Greeks call στοργήν, and other similar feelings, which form that natural code, or, rather, that ideal of right which nature, according to the Roman jurisconsults, has implanted in animals. Finally, can it be denied that man has a natural impulse to turn away from filthy things, for the reason merely that there are people who delight in foul language, that there are others whose business obliges them to handle manures, or that there are tribes in Bootan which regard the excrements of their king as an aromatic perfume? I fancy, sir, that, at heart, you are of my opinion as to these natural instincts for what is right; although you may say, as you did in regard to that instinct which leads us to seek felicity, that these impressions are not innate truths. But I have already replied, that every feeling is the perception of a truth, and that the natural feelings are perceptions of innate truths, though they are often confused, as are the experiences of our bodily senses. Thus we may distinguish innate truths from the natural light (which includes only what is distinctly cognizable), as the genus should be distinguished from the species; for the innate truths include the instincts as well as the natural light."

which belong to the same race, the Indo-European, and have been elevated by the same religion — have one and the same system of morality, and that the differences which still exist are gradually disappearing under the growing light of philosophical knowledge. Nor will I dwell upon the point, already so clearly proved, that pagan morality, the morality of the Greeks and the Romans, of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, had by its natural and spontaneous development attained the conception of the same moral ideas which in Judæa found so dazzling an expression in the maxims of the gospel. This has been placed beyond doubt by many admirable works. I ought, perhaps, to call attention to a point less generally known; that is, the profound and wonderful analogy between the moral science of the Orient and that of the Occident, between the maxims of India and China on one hand, and on the other those of Greece and Judæa. In proving that all great civilizations have had the same theory of morals — sometimes expressed in almost identical terms, though there is no ground for supposing that these were borrowed or imitated from one race by another — we should undoubtedly demonstrate positively the moral unity of the human species. Orientalists have therefore rendered a great service to moral science by putting in our hands the great philosophical and religious works of the East — the *Vedas*, the *Laws of Manu*, the great Indian epics, the Buddhist legends, the *Zend-Avesta*, the sacred and classical books of China. I shall draw largely from these various sources whatever is necessary for supporting my position.[1]

India has, as we know, given rise to two great religions, Brahminism and Buddhism, the latter of which is only a branch and development of the former. All the morality of Brahminism is summed up in the *Laws of Manu*, one of the oldest and most beautiful sacred books in the world. As to Buddhistic morality, this is now familiar to us through the numerous legends with which M. Eugène Burnouf has

[1] See my *Histoire de la Science Politique*, introd. (second ed., Paris, 1872).

acquainted us, and of which M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire has made such a happy use in his book on Buddha. Let us first give a summary of the principal points of the Brahminic morality.

The *Laws of Manu*, like the law of Moses, contain a *decalogue*, or moral code summed up in eight precepts: —

"Resignation [he says], *the act of returning good for evil*, temperance, honesty, purity, the control of the senses, the knowledge of the *Soutras*, or sacred books, and the knowledge of the supreme soul (God), these are the eight virtues which compose duty."[1]

To these eight virtues are opposed eight vices, which do not exactly correspond to the virtues: —

"Eagerness in telling of evil, violence, the act of doing injury in secret, envy, calumny, the act of appropriating another's property, that of injuring and striking some one, compose the series of eight vices produced by anger."

"If we compare the decalogue of Manu with that of Moses, we shall find that the latter is more complete and precise, relating to more definite and well-defined actions. The other is more vague, but also more exalted; it applies, not merely to exterior acts, but also to those which are moral; it forbids, not only homicide, theft, and adultery, but also calumny, envy, and treachery; it commands us to return good for evil, and does all this many centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ. Finally, the decalogue of Moses is that of a legislator, and the decalogue of Manu is that of a moralist.

The moral code of Moses has often been accused of being merely carnal: Christianity has repeatedly made this accusation. This reproach is not applicable to the morality of Manu, which is wholly spiritual and interior, choosing for the expression of moral purity words which are worthy of Stoicism and of Christianity. See how he describes the moral consciousness:

[1] *Laws of Manu*, vi. 92.

"The soul is its own witness; never despise your so[illegible]an, an[illegible]l. The wicked say, 'No one sees you;' but the gods behold them, and s[illegible]o does the spirit which is within them. O man! when thou sayest, [illegible]and th[illegible]I am alone with myself — in thy heart dwells always that supreme spi[illegible]hich st[illegible]it, the silent and attentive observer of good and evil. This spirit which [illegible]g light [illegible]dwells within thy heart is a severe judge, inflexible in punishment: it is [illegible]pon tha god."[1]

Moral sanctions, as well as the disinterested[illegible]y, the [illegible]stotle, [illegible]ess of virtue, find in the same book exact and clear express[illegible] develion; and the idea of immortality, the absence, or at least the [illegible] w[illegible]omission, of which in the moral scheme of Moses has been re[illegible]f-marked upon, is expressed in the noblest manner. "By performing the prescribed duties, *not having for motive the expectation of reward*, man attains immortality."[2] "After they have restored his body to the earth, the relatives of the dead man depart; but *virtue accompanies his soul.*"[3] . . .

The most beautiful precepts of practical morals are also found in Manu. Charity, humanity, sincerity, humility, are repeatedly recommended in the most noble and refined language. "He who is gentle and patient will attain heaven through charity.[4] . . . One should never injure another, nor even think of doing so."[5] So much for charity. As to sincerity, could any thing nobler than the following words be uttered? —

"He who gives good people an account of himself which is contrary to the truth, is the most criminal of beings: he *appropriates by theft a character which does not belong to him.* . . . Speech establishes all things: speech is the basis of society. . . . The wretch who purloins this, steals all things."[6]

Hypocrisy, too, is branded in the following energetic words: "He who unfurls the standard of virtue, but who is always grasping, who uses fraud, . . . is like a cat."[7] The Devidja, with downcast eyes, with a perverse disposition, is said to be like a heron.[8] "Every pious act, hypocritically performed,

[1] *Laws of Manu*, viii., 91. [2] Ibid., ii., 5. [3] Ibid., iv., 240.
[4] Ibid., iv., 246. [5] Ibid., ii., 161. [6] Ibid., iv., 255, 256. [7] Ibid., iv., 195.
[8] Ibid., iv., 196. I cannot see why the poor heron should be here taken as the symbol of hypocrisy.

goes to Rākchasas." False piety, the pharisaic piety which exhibits itself ostentatiously, is condemned in these words, which recall those of the gospel: "Let not a man be proud of his austerities; when he has offered a sacrifice, let him not tell a lie; when he has made a gift, let him not go and proclaim it everywhere." Finally, we remark, that, in that land of mysticism and ascetic practices, contemplative devotion is ranked below morality. "Let the wise man," he says, "constantly perform his moral duties with more care than even his duties of piety: he who neglects moral duties will fall, even though he observe all the duties of piety."[1]

In the *Laws of Manu* all classes of society may find their duties defined with precision, and these rules are as applicable to the Occident as to the Orient. Here is what he says of the duties of kings: "Let the king be severe or gentle according to circumstances." "A king who punishes the innocent, and spares the guilty, will go to hell." "Let not a king, however poor he may be, take possession of that which he ought not to take."[2] The following are the duties of soldiers: "In combat with his enemy, a warrior should never use perfidious weapons, poisoned arrows.[3] Let him not strike a fallen enemy, nor one who begs for mercy, nor him who says 'I am thy prisoner,' . . . nor a sleeping man, nor one who is disarmed, nor one who is fighting with another." Do not forget that this Indian code is several centuries anterior to Christianity, and you will recognize its full beauty. He speaks thus of the duties of judges: "Justice strikes when it is wounded; it preserves when it is defended." Thus of witnesses: "Either one should not come before the tribunal, or one should speak the truth. He who says nothing, and he who utters a lie, are alike guilty."[4] Finally, the innumerable rules given by this legislator as to usury, deposits, trade, theft, injuries, assassination, adultery, and rape, differ in no essential points from those which are accepted by the moral consciousness of the Occident.

[1] *Laws of Manu*, iv., 204.
[2] Ibid., vii., 140 *et seq.*
[3] Ibid., vii., 90.
[4] Ibid., viii., 13.

There remain to be considered family duties, with which are connected those toward seniors, old men, and instructors. — Respect toward the aged: "He who is accustomed to salute old people, and show them respect, will see the duration of his existence augmented."[1] — Respect to teachers: "A teacher is the image of the divine being."[2] — Respect toward parents: "Let the young man do always that which will please his parents. . . . This is the greatest act of devotion. . . . It is the first duty: all others are secondary."[3] The reciprocal duties of husbands and wives are expressed in the most refined and noble way: "Let a woman love and respect her husband; she shall be honored in heaven."[4] "After losing her husband, let her never even utter the name of any other man."[5] "Wherever women are honored, the gods are pleased." "Shut up under the guardianship of men, women are not in safety: only those are safe who protect themselves by their own free will." "The husband and wife are but one person." What can be more charming than this definition of a marriage of affection? — "The union of a young girl and a young man, when it springs from mutual affection, is called the marriage of celestial musicians."

We must unquestionably admit the faults of Brahminic morality. The principal ones are: the overwhelming number of religious ordinances, the greater part of which are as foolish as they are useless, the abuses of asceticism and of the contemplative life; finally, the system of castes, and a sacerdotal despotism unparalleled elsewhere in the world. Here are some instances of this: "Between a *Kchatrya*

[1] *Laws of Manu*, ii., 121.
[2] Ibid., ii., 227.
[3] Ibid., ii., 227, 228, 237.
[4] Ibid., v., 155.
[5] Ibid., v., 157. We see that no mention is made here of the barbarous custom prevailing among the Indian women of burning themselves on the funeral-pyres of their husbands. This is a fanatical practice, of which some highly wrought woman set the example, and which, introduced by fashion and a sort of contagion, became a general custom. This should not be imputed to differences of race.

(warrior) a hundred years old and a Brahmin ten years old, there is the relation of father and son; but the Brahmin is the father, and the *Kchatrya* is the son." "If the king find a treasure, let him give half to the Brahmins: if a Brahmin find a treasure, let him keep the whole." "The Brahmin is the king of the air: all other men enjoy terrestrial goods only by the permission of the Brahmin."

As to the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies, this is one of the characteristics of early religions: in this respect the Mosaic religion has no occasion to criticise that of Brahma. The excess of contemplative asceticism may more properly be regarded as constituting a morality which is characteristic of the Indian race. To them, contemplation seems the supreme good: we find this in action. From this it is inferred that there is one morality for the Orient, and another for the Occident; i.e., truth is on one side of the Pyrenees, and error on the other!

I would remark, however, that the conflict between action and contemplation exists, not merely between the Occident and the Orient; that it is not alone a conflict of race and of climate. It has existed in the Occident itself between the mystics and the moralists, between the partisans of monasticism and the defenders of active and political life: finally, it is found even in the clergy, between the secular priests and the regulars. This conflict arises from human nature itself, to which the supreme good seems sometimes to lie in labor and action, sometimes in repose. Let us not forget, that Aristotle himself, the most Greek of all Greeks, and the most practical of philosophers, regards the contemplative life as that which contains the greatest and most perfect happiness.[1] Suppose, finally, that we have here a problem which has never been solved: is the science of morals the only one which contains unsolved problems?

To return to India, it must not be supposed that the sages

[1] It is true that Aristotle speaks only of scientific contemplation; but, at this height, religion and science are identical.

of this country, in spite of the natural propensities of their race, gave themselves up unreservedly to the attractions of a contemplative life, and were blind to its evils. Thus, for instance, the laws of Manu do not permit the head of a family to devote himself to solitary life "until his hair is white, and he sees before him the son of his son." We see, also, from one of the most beautiful productions of the Indian philosophy, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, that the conflict between contemplation and action, already spoken of, existed in India, as well as among us. "There are two doctrines," says the *Bhagavad-Gita;* "the doctrine of speculation, and the doctrine of practice." The author of this book wished to reconcile the two. "Only children and ignorant people," he says, "speak of the speculative and the practical doctrines as being two distinct doctrines: they form but one science." Many passages in this admirable philosophical poem, the masterpiece of the Indian genius, are expressly designed to show the superiority of active life. "Renunciation and the practice of good works are two roads which conduct to supreme felicity, but the practice of good works is better than renunciation." "Action is superior to inaction. . . . The laying aside of the mortal form cannot be accomplished in inaction." "To be a *Sannyasa*, or a recluse without occupation, is to have trouble and anxiety; while the *Mouni* who is busy in fulfilling his duties is already united with Brahma, the all-powerful." Finally, to give added authority to these words, the god who is explaining the doctrine to the young prince, his listener, cries out in an admirable burst of eloquence, "I myself, O Arjouna! have nothing to do, and nothing to desire, in these three parts of the world; yet *I live in the exercise of my moral duties.*"

We see that the controversy between contemplation and action is not confined to the Occident nor to the Orient, but is common to both.[1] I admit, that in one there is more

[1] They are the same races, it is said; for we are known to be Indian. Granted; but the same conflict is found in China. Laotsen, a Chinese philos-

contemplation, in the other more action; yet there is, perhaps, only a difference of degree. There remains, then, as specially characterizing the Brahminic morality, the system of castes, and the pitiless division of the people into four classes, separated by impassable barriers. These are priests, soldiers, laborers and merchants, servants or slaves, not to mention that below these four legal classes, there is another nameless one, called by Manu, *Tchandalas*, who have not even the honor of being legally slaves. Never has human inequality been consecrated in a more brutal and odious manner. Never was it expressed in more revolting terms: "The four classes have for their first cause Brahma; he produced each from a different part of himself. The *Brahmins* came from his mouth, the *Kchatrya* from his arm, the *Vaicya* from his thigh, the *Sudras* from his foot." Each class has its own special duties. "The duty of the *Brahmin* is peace and moderation; the duty of the *Kchatrya* is valor; the duty of the *Vaicya* is the cultivation of the earth, and trade; the duty of the *Sudras* is servitude." Thus, virtue seems to be a privilege. The noblest virtues belong to the Brahmins, the most brilliant to the warriors: as to the lower classes, they have nothing that can properly be called either duties or virtues; they have functions, and the lowest of all has no function but that of serving the others. Finally, we have already seen to what heights of sacerdotal pride the class of Brahmins rose; though the laws of Manu commanded them to be humble, and urged them "to seek contempt as though it were ambrosia:" feigned humility has never failed to accompany theocratic insolence.[1]

opher, is contemplative: Confucius is practical. China is exclusively practical, it is said. Then, how does it happen that Buddhism is more generally accepted there than anywhere else in Asia? They have taken only its superstitions, it is said. But, in India itself, have the people taken any thing from Brahminism besides its superstitions? True contemplatives are everywhere exceptional: the Fénelons are everywhere in a minority.

[1] Thus the popes, in the Middle Ages, proclaimed themselves *the servants of the servants of God.*

Yet, although the inequality of men has possibly never been proclaimed in more insolent terms than by the Brahminic legislation and religion, it is but just to say that caste prejudices are by no means the exclusive error of Oriental races. Theoretically, Aristotle's *Apology for Slavery* is not behind the *Laws of Manu* in the brutality of its expression.

"If the shuttle would weave by itself [says Aristotle], there would be no need for slaves. . . . The slave is *the man of another man*. Do men exist *who are as inferior to other men as are the brutes?* If there are any such, they are intended for slaves. Now, there are men who have just reason enough to comprehend the reason of others. For such, corporal labor is the only useful employment. They are slaves by nature."

As to sacerdotal despotism, Europe has known this as well as India, if not to the same extent. In the *False Decretals* it is written; "Let all the princes of the earth, and all men whatsoever, obey the priests, and *bow their heads before them*."[1]

Thus the Occident has no occasion for reviling the Orient on account of the principle of castes; and, conversely, it may be said that the Orient did not need aid from the wisdom of the Occident to attain to the conception of the equality of men. Spontaneously, and without leaving India, the human soul was able to apprehend in its full force the principle of human brotherhood: it is the glory of Buddhism, as it is of Christianity, that it proclaimed this principle. It certainly cannot be affirmed that the latter borrowed it from the former; but assuredly the former did not receive it from the latter, since it is far anterior to it. One may, doubtless, bring plausible and specious arguments against the metaphysics of Buddhism;[2] but, as for its morality, that is of an incomparable beauty, which yields to none, not even to Christianity.

[1] *Pseudo-Isidorus* (ed. of Geneva, 1628), letter i., attributed to Pope Clement I.

[2] M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, in his book on Buddha, is very severe in his condemnation of Buddhism, which he calls an *atheistic religion*. This is not the proper place for considering the famous question of Nirvâna: it is enough to say that my opinion upon this point is exactly opposite to that of the learned critic, although he is supported by the high authority of Eugène Burnouf.

In Brahminism, piety and salvation were, in a sense, the privilege of the Brahmin. Çakia, the holy founder of Buddhism, opened heaven to all. "My law," he said, "*is a law of grace unto all.*" Thus, also, St. Paul and the other apostles never attacked directly the civil institution of slavery: but they said, "There are neither bond nor free; there are neither rich nor poor: *we are all brothers in Christ Jesus.*"[1]

When the principle of religious equality has once been proclaimed, it is not difficult to deduce from it the principle of natural equality. Thus, much later, we find the Buddhistic philosophy attacking the system of caste with arguments which sound as if borrowed from our philosophy of the eighteenth century.

"There is no such difference between a Brahmin and a man of another caste [says one of the Buddhist legends] as there is between a stone and gold, or between light and darkness. The Brahmins came neither from the ether nor from the wind: they did not found the earth that they might appear in the light of day. A Brahmin comes forth from the womb of a woman, just as a *Tchandala* does. A Brahmin, when he is dead, is forsaken as being vile and unclean: it is the same with him as with other castes. *Where, then, is the difference?*"

In a more modern treatise the author speaks still more boldly: —

"The *unumbora* and the *parasa*[2] produce fruit from their branches, their stalks, their joints, and their roots; yet these fruits are not distinguishable one from the other. We cannot say, this is the *Brahmin* fruit, this the *Kchatrya*, this the *Vaicya*, this the *Sudra;* for all come from the same tree. *Hence there are not four classes, but one only.*"

The resemblances between the theories of morals, which are found among the Persians,[3] the Indians, and even the

[1] Those who have inferred from this text that the apostles forbid slavery, should also logically say that they denied the rights of property, since there are *neither rich nor poor* in Jesus Christ.

[2] Names of trees.

[3] We have little knowledge as to the moral ideas of the ancient Persians; but those which are furnished us, either by the *Zend-Avesta* or by the testi-

Greeks, and our own moral ideas, may be said to be due to race-identity, as it is known that these different peoples are but diverse branches from the same tree from which all the nations now existing in Europe originally sprang; but this explanation would at least prove the uniformity of the moral type among all the descendants of that race. What will be said if the same, and perhaps even more striking, resemblances are found among people of an entirely different race, who have no common sort with us, either physiologically, philologically, or ethnologically, but who spontaneously, by the natural exercise of reflection, have attained similar principles expressed in almost the same words? In this respect, what can be more instructive or admirable than the moral science of the greatest sage of China, one of the greatest sages of the world, Confucius, and also of the courageous and spiritual Mencius, who revived his doctrine?

In regard to the moral law and its essential features, Confucius expresses himself with such nobility, decision, and clearness, as is found only among the Grecian philosophers, or in the modern European philosophy. In his view, the essential character of this law is the very same the truth of which we are now considering; that is, immutable and absolute obligation. "The rule for our moral conduct," he says, "is so obligatory that we cannot disobey it in a single point for a single moment. If it could be disregarded, it would no longer be an immutable law of conduct." . . . "The law of duty is by itself the law of duty," he says again, most admirably. He pictures for us this eternal law, the same for all, whatever may be their condition, accessible to the humblest, yet, at the same time, surpassing all the efforts of the wisest, so broad that it may be applied to every human action, yet so subtle that it is not manifest for all. This law inspires in him expressions of passionate enthusiasm. "Oh, how grand is the law of the holy man! It is a shoreless ocean.

mony of the ancients, justify us in saying that their general ideas of morality were the same as those of the Greeks and the East Indians.

It produces and sustains all beings. Its height reaches to the heavens. Oh, how vast and abundant it is!" Listen, too, to these noble and touching words: "If in the morning you have heard the voice of celestial reason, in the evening you may well die." [1]

Temperance, dignity, self-control, simplicity of life — these are the virtues which Confucius requires of his wise man, who is like a sage of the Stoics, but without his pride and self-assertion. "If he is rich, and loaded with honors, he will act as a man who is rich and loaded with honors should do. If he is poor and despised, he will act as a man who is poor and despised should do. The wise man who has identified himself with the law will always maintain sufficient self-control to enable him to fulfil all the duties of his condition, whatever that condition may be." "To live on a little rice merely, and to rest one's head only on one's bended arm, is a condition which has its sweetness." "To become rich and honored by iniquitous means is to me the image of the passing cloud which floats away over our heads." "To forsake the world, to be neither seen nor known of men, is not possible for any but a saint." "The superior man is distressed by his powerlessness, and is not understood by mankind."

The perfecting of one's self is but the first part of his system: the second and the most important is the perfecting of others. Confucius regards the virtue of humanity as the chief of all. Fan-tche asks what is this virtue of humanity. The philosopher replies, "To love mankind." "One should love mankind with all the strength and compass of one's affection." "The superior man is he who feels the same kindness toward all." In some passages the sentiment of brotherhood is expressed in touching and passionate words. The philosopher says; "I would gladly procure for old men sweet repose, preserve a constant fidelity between

[1] These passages will be found in my *Histoire de la Science Politique* (second ed., Paris, 1872), t. i., Introduction, p. 42, *et seq.*

friends, and give to women and to children truly maternal care!" Seu-mamieou, affected with melancholy, said; "Every one has brothers: I only have none." The philosopher answered, "Let the superior man regard all the men who live between the four seas as his brothers." Finally, we find in Confucius these celebrated gospel maxims, expressed in the very same words: "The doctrine of our master," says Meng-tseu, "consists solely in having uprightness of heart, and loving our neighbor as ourselves." "To act toward men as we wish that they should act toward us, this is the doctrine of humanity."

I do not wish to give here the history of moral science in China; but it will not be out of place to recall the opinion expressed by Mencius, who maintained, just as I am now doing, the universality of moral ideas.

"All men [he said] feel the sentiment of mercy and pity; all men feel the sentiment of hatred and of vice; all men feel the sentiment of deference and respect; all men feel the sentiment of approbation and of blame." "As all men have a similar faculty of taste, which makes them take pleasure in similar seasonings, sounds, and forms; so also all men have the same hearts, and that which all hearts hold in common is equity."

Generally speaking, the philosopher Meng-tseu merely reproduces, often in very happy terms, but with no alterations, the moral teachings of Confucius. But there is one important point in which he exhibits true originality, and where he shows us a feature in Oriental morals which we had wrongly supposed to be entirely lacking there. We always think of the Orient, and especially of China, as a place where unlimited despotism prevails, and which is given up to boundless servility. This is an error. There also human nature has recognized and defended its dignity; there also power has found critics; there also bold advice and threats have not been wanting when tyrants have endeavored to oppress the people. Perhaps it might be

hard to find in the Occident, even now, philosophers who would dare to say to their sovereigns what a Chinaman ventured to say in the time of Mencius and Confucius.

Mencius was particularly remarkable for the boldness of his speech, and the freedom of his criticism. He is characterized especially by wit and by audacity. A prime-minister announced to him his intention of lightening the burdens of the people, and promised to diminish the vexatious taxes year by year without suppressing them entirely. Mencius answered in this clever parable: "There was once a man who daily took his neighbors' fowls. Some one said to him, What you are doing is not honest. He replied, I intend to correct myself of this vice by degrees: I will take but one fowl a month until next year, and afterwards I will entirely refrain from theft." On another occasion the same philosopher, in talking with the king of Tsi, asked him: "What should one do to a friend who has badly administered the affairs intrusted to him?" — "Break with him," said the king. "And to a magistrate who does not perform his duties properly?" — "Remove him from office," said the king. "And, if provinces are badly governed, what should be done?" The king, pretending not to understand him, looked to right and left, and spoke of other things. This is the way with all governments when one tells them the truth.

It surprises us to find in Chinese philosophy political doctrines very strongly resembling those which in the West we call liberal. How does it explain the right of sovereignty? As being a sort of agreement between God and the people. The emperor does not himself appoint his successor: he can only offer him for the acceptation of God and the people. Now, the will of God is not expressed by words, but he expresses it by the consent of the people. Mencius quotes, in support of this theory, these words by Chon-King, which prove that it was the traditional doctrine of the empire. "Heaven sees all things, but does so through the eyes of the people. Heaven hears all things, but does so through the

ears of the people."[1] Confucius maintains that a sovereign mandate loses its authority by unworthiness. Mencius maintains the same doctrine with even more energy, and he openly defended the right of insurrection. The king said to him: "Has a minister or a subject a right to dethrone and kill his prince?" The philosopher answered: "He who steals from humanity is called a *robber*. He who steals from justice is called a *tyrant*. I have heard that Tching-Thang put to death a tyrant: I have never heard that he killed his prince." We will close our summary of this curious political doctrine with these words, which would be bold, even in the Occident: "The people is the noblest thing in the world. . . . The prince is the thing of least importance."

I summed up in two propositions the sceptical objections: among savages there is no morality; among civilized nations the ideas of morality are contradictory. To these two propositions I oppose two others: there is no savage tribe in which we do not find the germs of morality; in proportion as peoples rise to the same plane of civilization, they form moral ideas which resemble each other more and more closely, whatever may be their differences of race, climate, and habits. These two propositions, which are the exact antitheses of the preceding ones, are justified, and will be more and more so, by a thorough examination of the facts.

The result of this investigation is, that moral contradictions depend upon the degree of ignorance or of intelligence to which a people has arisen. In proportion as they grow wiser, they tend more and more toward one and the same conception of morals, which is the very thing that we call civilization; and the chief object of all intelligent moral science is, to extend the knowledge and improve the compre-

[1] *Vox populi, vox dei.* These maxims, which are still current in China, have undoubtedly lost all their force in the lapse of time, just as the old republican formulas did in the Roman empire; but they had a very real meaning at the first: and the Chinese have used, at least as much as any other people, "the right of appeal to Heaven," as Locke defines the right of insurrection.

hension of those moral laws, which, if not truly universal in the past, are to become so in the future. Thus we have seen the prejudices and vices which belong more or less to the state of barbarism, gradually disappearing. Thus, for example, as the feeling of respect for human life has developed more and more among mankind, under the double influence of philosophy and of religion, we have seen every thing which is opposed to this principle disappear or grow weaker. Thus cannibalism, the vendetta, private wars, human sacrifices, tyrannicide, suicide, duelling, and the use of torture, after being for a long time allowable and even honorable practices, have gradually disappeared from manners and from opinions. Thus, as the true idea of the family has been disseminated, we have seen the disappearance, or the limitation to certain countries, of polygamy, of a father's right of life and death over his children, of the right of primogeniture, etc. In regard to property, as society has become more settled, we have seen pillage and brigandage, which at first were the privilege of heroes, become the refuge of malefactors: we have seen the rights of property become more and more accessible to all, and better and better guaranteed. In regard to personal liberty, we have seen slavery in all its forms successively disappear from civilized states. In regard to religion, we have seen the passing away of violence and cruelty exercised in the name of religious faith. In regard to international rights, we have seen the rights of war gradually reduced to what is strictly necessary: we have successively abandoned or condemned pillage, the massacre of the conquered, the reduction of prisoners to slavery, odious means of warfare, such a spoison; and in time of peace, a hatred of strangers, the right of *aubaine*,[1] and all similar relics of a state of barbarism. In a word, as the appreciation of the dignity of man and of human brotherhood has become more and more general, men have come to understand better

[1] By an old French law, the sovereign inherited the property of a foreign resident who died within his domains. This was called the *droit d'aubaine*. — *Trans.*

the results of these principles, and will continue to grow in the comprehension of them. Thus the progress of human consciousness will gradually bring about the disappearance of those contradictions so often encountered by moralists.

But can the progressive development of moral ideas be reconciled with the doctrine of an immutable and absolute moral law? Is that which is absolute, susceptible of change? This apparent difficulty is removed by a very simple distinction — that between truth in itself and the knowledge of truth which we possess. Geometry certainly attains truths which are immutable and absolute, yet the science of geometry is progressive. Each of the truths of which geometric truth consists, have been successively developed before our eyes: we draw consequences from principles; and each new consequence is an acquisition, a progressive step. Thus science develops from theorem to theorem, while truth undergoes no change. The same is true of all sciences, even of those which are experimental. Physics and chemistry do not have for their object those truths which are called in logic absolute; that is to say, necessary and *à priori*. But these truths are, nevertheless, immutable. They have been the same ever since the origin of things, though we have only gradually come to know them; and the errors which have been made in regard to them do not prove that they are themselves arbitrary and variable.

Why should it not be the same in moral science? There are moral, as well as physical, laws: there are moral, as well as geometric, truths. In themselves these truths and these laws are absolute, immutable, and universal; but they do not appear to us at first in their entirety, nor always in their true colors. We make false or incomplete hypotheses in morals, just as we do in physics. Finally, error does not prove the non-existence of truth. Moral science is derived from an increasing knowledge of human nature. It has two sources — human nature and brotherhood. In proportion as mankind understand more fully the value of human person-

ality and the identity of nature in all men, moral science will be extended and developed. But this double knowledge requires also the development of thought and of feeling. Just as men had at first no idea of the laws of nature or of the order of the universe, and reached this conception but slowly; so at first they had no feeling for the value of man, nor for the community of essence or the solidarity which unites men one to another.

Moral progress is not, then, incompatible with the intrinsic immutability of moral truths. On the contrary, it may be said, that, but for the hypothesis of an absolute moral law within our consciences, this progress itself would be inexplicable; for change is not necessarily progress. If there were not something essentially good and true, I cannot see why one state of society should be better than another, respect for human life better than savage cruelty, human equality better than slavery, or religious toleration better than the bloodthirsty faith of the Middle Ages, or the still more bloodthirsty faith of the old prehistoric superstitions.

Finally, it is said that there are races which are stationary. It would be more just to say that there are those whose progress has been arrested, for none have been absolutely stationary: all have made some progress, only all have not risen to the same plane. But is not this also true of individuals? Profound and refined moral sentiments are not found in every man; there are some who point out the road; these are saints or sages. Others follow them afar off. Why may it not be the same with races? Some march in the van: the others follow at varying distances.

This is our summary. As Spinoza has said, man has two states—a state of nature, and a state of reason. In the first prevails the law of the strongest: in the second, peace and union are found. The law of humanity is, that it shall pass from the one to the other of these states, which can only be done in the course of time; that is, progressively. Each people, each race, each century, makes some advance toward

this goal; but no people, no century, has ever been completely plunged in the state of nature; none has attained the state of absolute reason. All march toward it at varying distances, but none has attained the goal. We must reverse the order which the eighteenth century established: what was then placed in the past, we must set before us in the future. The social contract was not the law of primitive societies, but it is the ideal law of future societies. The moral unity of human nature was not manifest in the infancy of our species; but it is the goal toward which it tends, and the secret reason for its unceasing ascent toward the better.

CHAPTER V.

THE MORAL SENTIMENT.

ONE of the strangest paradoxes in the philosophy of Kant, which I will even venture to call a disgraceful feature in it, is the sort of disfavor with which it regards good sentiments, those natural inclinations which lead us to act rightly spontaneously, and without effort. He does not recognize moral character in any thing, unless there is obedience to duty, that is to say, effort and struggle, which really implies resistance and rebellion; for struggle implies the existence of an obstacle. Does he wish to give us a correct idea of the duty of self-preservation? Then he pictures for us a man goaded by despair to the point of taking his own life, but triumphing over this savage misanthropy, and consenting to live purely out of respect for the law. So, too, if he wishes to illustrate the true fulfilment of duty to mankind, he paints a soul naturally cold and insensible, which, without pity and without weakness, does good to others because it is its duty, and from no other motive. Any other love than that which manifests itself by external acts is branded with his condemnation by the title which he gives it, *pathological* love.[1] He even goes so far as to take every spark of

[1] Kant himself acted on these theories. He had a sister who was, like himself, of rather low extraction; and, as she had not ennobled herself by education and intelligence, there was no sympathy between them. He paid her a pension, but always refused to see her. He thought he fulfilled all his duty by giving her money. Strange resemblance between Kant and Pascal! Both, through religious or philosophic fanaticism, trampled under foot the most natural sentiments of the human race, and one of the best, the most innocent of all — the love of a brother for his sister.

internal charity from those touching words of the gospel, "Love one another," by reducing them exclusively to external obligations, forgetting those admirable words of St. Paul's: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

I grant that this dry and haughty morality may serve to develop in man masculine virtues and virile energy: its noblest service is, that it has brought into clear view the idea of law. It is but just to say that it was a strong and legitimate re-action against the sickly and mawkish sentimentality of the eighteenth century. But I find it hard to believe that it contains all the truth of moral science.

When one reads, and becomes profoundly imbued with, Kant's philosophy, one finds one's self in a strange moral condition: one repents of one's good sentiments, and suffers remorse for them.[1] "What!" says one to himself. "I love my friends, I love my children, I love mankind! I am endowed with pity and tenderness! All this has no moral value. Why did not nature make me an egotist? Then I might have obeyed the duty which commands me to sacrifice myself for others! Why did not nature inspire in me disgust for all family joys? Then I might at least have had some merit in performing my domestic duties. I am weary of myself in my heart, but it is a moral weariness. I love my parents tenderly: what misery! It is a pathological love. If nature had made me without any feeling for them, doubtless my cares and attentions would have had less charm for them than now; but they would have possessed a moral character, a moral value. The only thing which has an absolute value is the good will. Now, good sentiments do not come from the will: they do not shine with their own radiance. Blessed are the poor in heart! Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

[1] Schiller, as is well known, uttered this charming epigram: "I feel pleasure in doing good to my neighbor; this troubles me, for I feel that I am not entirely virtuous."

Thus we see that such a morality not only causes us to feel scruples and remorse as to our good feelings, but it even seems to be impossible if we do not have bad sentiments. It always represents duty as a constraint, a rule, a discipline. But this constraint evidently presupposes the resistance of the sensibility. If we had no passions, what would there be for us to conquer? He who has no taste for the pleasures of the table, or for the pleasures of love, will naturally abstain from both without needing the restraint of the law. He who has never experienced the passion for gaming has no need of the precept which forbids it: he who has never felt the desire for vengeance, never thinks of the law which forbids revenge. Even supposing, that, in abstaining from these actions, the moral agent tells himself that he abstains out of respect for the law, how can he be assured that he is not deceiving himself, since his instinct would lead him to abstain, even if no law required it?

Thus, if one accepts the theory of the categorical imperative, one must regret his good sensibilities, and desire to have evil ones, if he wishes to attain true morality. In this doctrine also we have the elect and the reprobate. Only, here the elect are those who are born with vices: the condemned are those whom Providence has made good, pious, naturally sincere and courageous. The former have it in their power to acquire a true moral value: the latter enjoy a happy temperament, but merit and morality are interdicted to them. If it had been possible for God to make me as good as himself, I should be the most unhappy of men; since no virtue would be left for me to attain by my own merits.

I think that we may find in Kant's philosophy itself a reply to the difficulty which has just been suggested.

It seems to me that Kant, in his profound analysis of the moral law, has formed two successive ideas, which he sometimes distinguishes and sometimes confounds. He starts with the idea of a good will, a pure and perfect will, unruffled by passions, which obeys the law out of respect for

the law. In this state of pure will it is evident that the agent will fulfil the law without any sort of effort or resistance; he identifies himself with it; in a certain sense he himself becomes the law. It is this state of pure, absolute, infallible will, which Kant calls holiness, and sets up as an ideal which is inaccessible to the human will. Suppose, now, that this law exists in a being endowed with sensibility, closely united with nature, urged on by appetites and inclinations; this pure law, encountering resistance, would become a rule and a constraint; it would become *duty*. Duty, then, is not moral law in its purity. It is the moral law which has, in a certain sense, descended into the world of sensation, and entered into conflict with the passions.

Thus, according to Kant's philosophy, we may consider the moral law from two points of view, regarding it either abstractly in an absolutely reasonable will, or regarding it as duty in a being who is at once reasonable and sensitive. The love of the pure will for the law is *holiness:* the harmony of the human will with duty is *virtue*.

Though these two points of view have been very clearly distinguished by Kant, yet he often forgets the distinction he has made; and, when he wishes to speak of morality, he always takes for his type the idea of duty, instead of employing the idea of the pure and absolute will with which he set out. Though the fact of having rebellious inclinations is by no means involved in the abstract idea of a good will, yet he always makes morality consist in a government over the inclinations. That which is, and which according to his own theory should be, merely a relative condition, becomes for him the absolute type of morality. Hence comes that "Judaic and military" character which has been so justly attributed to his philosophy. Hence arise also those paradoxical consequences to which I have already called attention, and which would give us a horror of all moral science if this were really commissioned to inspire in us disgust and aversion for all the lovely qualities of the soul — for sacred

innocence, for impulsive charity, for unreflecting affection, for kindness, and for pity.

It is impossible to persuade one's self that a state of warfare with all the inclinations is the highest ideal for man. It is self-evident that one fights to conquer, and that, when victory is once gained, its reward is peace. Jouffroy has somewhere[1] admirably depicted this contrast between the militant and the victorious will — between the sublime spectacle of the effort, and the perfect beauty of the triumphant repose. Virtue is not the end: it is but the means. It is the means by which man may rise to his full purity, his full excellence, his full dignity. In this state of purity and excellence, the soul will no longer need to exert itself to do the good: it will have become good. So long as the will struggles against evil, it is not yet the good will: it only aspires to become this. If it struggles, it is because there is *temptation;* and temptation is evidently incompatible with the idea of a perfect will.

Let us go farther. Let us attempt to rise, with Kant, to the conception of an absolutely good will; and let us inquire if this consists in obeying the law *out of respect* for the law. This is certainly the idea of duty; but is it the idea of holiness? Will a pure will rest content with respecting the law? Will it not conform to it naturally, spontaneously, consenting fully to it — in one word, loving it? I will say, then, modifying Kant's formula, that a pure will is one which does good *for the love of good.*

Kant conceives good only as being something intelligible. But good is not merely intelligible, it is lovable. "If beauty," says Plato, "could appear to us as it is, and unveiled, it would excite in us surpassing love." What Plato said of the beautiful may also be said of the good. Aristotle, who is not regarded as a poet, has pictured good, also, as being supremely lovable, supremely desirable.

[1] See the passage on the faculties of the soul, in his first *Mélanges Philosophiques.*

Thus, in a state of absolute purity, the will is simply the voluntary love of good, without effort, without struggle, without obedience to a dry and abstract law. What we call *law* — that is to say, duty — is only the relation of this pure will to our actual and secret will: it is the command which the superior part of our being gives to its inferior part. This is the reason why it is the will which dictates its own law, as we have seen to be the case. The pure will is, then, identical with the law: it is not subjected to the law.

Kant made a profound study of the only moral sentiment which he was willing to recognize — the sentiment of respect. This is, he says, the result of the law, and hence is, like the law itself, an objective and formal mutable, which cannot be suspected of leading to eudæmonism. But the same thing might be said of love. Love, like respect, is only a consequence of the law; and I cannot love a law of which I know nothing. Now, if to act from *respect* for the law in no way diminishes the autonomy of my will and the purity of my act, why should acting from *love* of the law diminish in any way the disinterestedness of virtue? Besides, whatever Kant may say, though the sentiment of respect may unquestionably be posterior to the knowledge of the law, yet, in the soul of him who acts, it is anterior to the action. Hence it enters into the action as a determining factor; and therefore, whatever may be said, sensibility is concerned. Kant describes this sentiment in such a way that one cannot really tell whether it is a sentiment, or not. Is it accompanied by pleasure or by pain? In that case, it does not differ in any respect from the other moral sentiments; and I cannot see why Kant should give it such special privileges. If it is accompanied neither by pleasure nor by pain, how can it be called a sentiment? At bottom, the sentiment of respect is nothing else than the sentiment of human dignity; that is to say, the pleasure which accompanies the idea of our moral grandeur, and the pain which accompanies the idea of its forfeiture. Unquestionably this is an essential part of the moral senti-

ment; but is it the whole? Is it the best? Is it the purest, the most exalted? Are not the love of good for the sake of good, the love of moral beauty and moral purity, the love of humanity and the love of God in all, sentiments which are fully as disinterested as the sentiment of personal dignity and of self-respect — perhaps even more so?

Kant has justly remarked that the sentiment of respect is one which is more painful than agreeable, because it is founded above all on the consciousness of our weakness and of our moral infirmity in the presence of the sanctity of the law. In reality, Kant here directs toward the law — that is to say, toward a blind and abstract power — that sentiment of secret fear which pious and mystical souls feel in view of the infinite grandeur of God. But whether this terror is occasioned by the idea of the law, or by the idea of a living divinity, one may inquire whether fear or humility is the noblest and purest sentiment which it is possible to feel in view of absolute sanctity, in whatever way one may conceive this idea of abstract sanctity. Love is above fear.

Having feared the law, not for its threatenings, but for its grandeur and its austerity, I say that we ought to love it for its beauty. The ancients never regarded good otherwise than as the supremely lovable, supremely desirable, object. The austere Aristotle himself, the severe theorist of the syllogism, utters sublime accents of emotion when he speaks of the love of good. In Kant's philosophy there is a sort of repellant Jansenism, by which I do not mean that he would sacrifice liberty to grace, but that he deprives virtue of all gracefulness and all beauty, that he sees in it only constraint and discipline, instead of joy, happiness, and charm. It is a monkish virtue, to which the rule is every thing. It is not the virtue of the Greeks, of a Socrates, a Plato, a Fénelon (for he, too, is a Greek) — a virtue accessible and sweet, a virtue lovable and noble, a virtue in which rhythm and poetry are commingled. Ὁ φιλόσοφος μουσικὸς: the philosopher is a musician. It is not the Christian virtue — a virtue of tenderness and

affection, a virtue of devotion and fraternity. "Love one another." Kant was right in refusing to admit that there is any thing superfluous above and beyond virtue: he was wrong in not including that superfluity within virtue. This necessary superfluity is the love of virtue.

If the ideal of the will consists in the love of good, not because the law commands it, but because it is good, how can it be regarded as a moral inferiority if we enjoy now an anticipatory image of that perfect state of excellence which we may, if we please, regard as the state of the blessed in heaven? Kindness of heart, a pure and holy inclination toward good, are a sort of credit already obtained toward that ideal perfection to which we must rise farther by our own exertions.

I am not blind to the difference between that love of good which we receive from nature, or from education, and the love of good which we attain by our own efforts; and I admit, that, for all human creatures, moral peace conquered by the will is superior to the joys of innocence, however exquisite these may be.

I desire merely to say that our natural inclinations are true goods, and that no one has a right to regret them in himself, nor to disdain them in others. In a philosophy whose absolute ideal would be obedience to the law from respect for the law, good inclinations find no place, and are even more hurtful than evil ones: for the latter may, at least, be vanquished; while the others, by relieving us from effort, deprive us of our true destiny. But in a philosophy whose ideal consists in doing good for the love of good, kindly and virtuous inclinations are an anticipation of that which is to be hereafter, a first specimen of the ideal set before us, a sort of foretaste of moral excellence and beauty. We ought not to be compelled to say that God created the heart of man in vain, and that he has injured us by his bounty.

Some may fear that this revindication of the rights of

sentiment may weaken the principle of morality; that is to say, the energy of individual action and the free efforts of the will. This would be a chimerical fear. The predominance of good instincts, even in the best of men, still leaves room enough for evil inclinations, so that there will remain for some time to come a sufficient margin for the imperious obligations of law and the moral conquests of the free will. The more highly you have been favored by nature, the more strictly are you under obligation to increase this natural good by your efforts to attain that which is lacking. Good sentiments are even themselves an occasion for conflict and moral perfecting, since you may have to strive against the temptations to which they themselves give rise. Sensibility is a snare as well as a gift. While it is good to love men, reason and duty are at hand to tell you that you must not sacrifice the austere duty of justice to the pleasing virtue of charity. While it is good to love one's family and one's friends, it is none the less a duty not to sacrifice to them either the good of others or the interests of your own virtue.

Thus there can be no question of substituting for the morality of duty the morality of sentiment. I object only to Kant's exaggeration, by which he excludes sentiment entirely from the domain of morality, and seems too often to confound the means of morality with its end. The end is, to succeed in being good. If God has made us partly so, and thus saved us some of the exertion necessary for attaining this end, it would be a very imperfect morality which would complain of this, which would put on the same plane both good and evil sentiments, and even discriminate in favor of the latter.

Finally, Kant maintains that love cannot be compelled to love; that sentiment is a phenomenon belonging to the order of nature, which can be neither produced nor prevented; consequently it is not moral. The only love which he recognizes is *practical* love, that which consists in acts. All other love is, in his opinion, *pathological;* that is to say, unhealthy.

Kant is undoubtedly right if he refers to that false sensibility or sentimentality which the poet Gilbert has so well described, and which the enervated literature of the end of the eighteenth century rendered ridiculous. One should be on one's guard against falling into effeminate tenderness, or into a maudlin philanthropy which sacrifices justice to a mawkish sensibility. But, setting aside all errors and abuses, there still remains the question whether we do not owe something to our own feelings, and whether action is the only thing enjoined upon us.

It is true that it does not depend upon our wills whether our hearts shall be more or less sympathetic. Nature has made some souls tender and affectionate, some cold and austere, some heroic and stern, etc.; and moralists should not overlook all these differences. We have no thermometer by which to measure the degree of sensibility which is required of each one of us. But two facts are certain, and authorize us to limit this harsh doctrine. The first is, that moral emotion (affection, enthusiasm for the beautiful, for one's country, etc.) is not entirely lacking in any human soul: the second is, that sensibility is not entirely beyond the reach of our will. We can stifle our good sentiments just as we can our evil passions: we can also develop and encourage them, and give them a greater or less share in our lives, by putting ourselves in the circumstances which excite them. For instance, a certain person has little sensibility or sympathy for the sufferings of the poor; but it is impossible that he should be absolutely destitute of any. Let him triumph over his repugnance and indifference, let him see the poor, let him put himself at the service of human misery: sympathy will inevitably be awakened in his heart. By its aid he will perform what is good more readily, and it will give to his soul a new degree of perfection and of beauty.

Whatever Kant may say, sentiment is not, then, the enemy of virtue. On the contrary, it is its ornament and its flower.

Aristotle was both more human and more correct when he said; "The virtuous man is the one who finds pleasure in performing virtuous acts." It is not enough to be virtuous: the heart must find pleasure in being so. If nature has been kind enough to give us the first-fruits of this feeling, we shall be very ungrateful if we are offended.

CHAPTER VI.

LIBERTY.

THE moral consciousness and the moral sentiment are not the only subjective conditions for the accomplishment of good. It is not sufficient to know and to love it, it must also be willed. Will accompanied by consciousness — that is to say, by the discernment of good and evil — is what is called *liberty*.

It is important to observe that liberty may be regarded in two ways — either as the *end* toward which we should tend, as the object of moral conduct; or as the *means* at our command for raising ourselves to that condition. In the first sense it is a *duty*, in the second it is a *power*.

In the first sense, man is truly free only when he is emancipated, not only from the yoke of exterior things, but also from that of his passions. Every one admits that he who blindly obeys his desires is not his own master, but is the slave of his body, his senses, his desires, and his fears. In this sense the child is not yet free, nor the passionate man, nor the drunken man. It is no longer the man who acts, it is nature and chance. On the other hand, he in whom reason reigns, who desires in every thing only what is true and good, has entire possession of himself, and is not the sport of any blind force. In this sense, the nearer man approaches to wisdom, the nearer he approaches to true liberty; and if we can conceive a perfect wisdom, a perfect reason, we at the same time conceive perfect liberty. Hence this first meaning does not include the power of doing good or evil, and of choosing between the two. On the contrary, to

do evil is to cease to be free: to do good is to be truly free. Perfect liberty is thus at the same time absolute impeccability.

But are we free to seek voluntarily this kind of liberty, identical with wisdom itself, and the opposite of slavery to the passions? Can we choose between it and its opposite? Here liberty assumes a new meaning; it becomes *free will;* it is no longer an end, but a means. Free will is the power of choosing between liberty and slavery: through this we are voluntarily free or voluntarily enslaved. He who consents to passion, puts himself under the yoke. He loses his liberty, but he wills to lose it. In this there is no contradiction; for men have been known to sell themselves as slaves, and thus freely enter into slavery; others have been known to refuse to ransom themselves. So, too, whole peoples have been known to renounce their liberty voluntarily. On the other hand, one may be free in spite of one's self. For instance, a child who is forced to perform reasonable actions, a passionate man who is compelled to emancipate himself from the dominion of his passion, and the madman who is cured by violent treatment. All these submit in spite of themselves to the freedom which others seek to regain or to preserve for them.

Having established this distinction, the problem may be thus stated: Are we free to be free? Or thus: Liberty, or absolute emancipation, being the end toward which we ought to tend, have we within ourselves the means of attaining it; that is to say, have we free will?

All philosophies which deny the existence of human liberty, and attribute every thing to necessity, are called *fatalism.* Of this there are several forms.

1. The grossest form of fatalism is that which is called in the schools the *fatum mahometanum,*[1] and consists in believ-

[1] According to the later historians of Mahometanism (*Mahomet et le Coran,* par B. Sainte-Hilaire, p. 205), it is unjust to impute this sort of fatalism to Mahomet. Nothing like it is found in the Koran.

ing that events are determined and connected by a blind force in such a way, that, whatever one may do, a certain thing will happen. It is belief in an occult power and in a sort of magic stronger than any special causes. The formula of this fatalism is thus expressed: "It was written." Beginning with this conception, this doctrine leads practically to an absolute quietism, since nothing can be done contrary to destiny. This is what Leibnitz (like the ancients) calls *the sophistry of indolence* (λόγος ἀργὸς), and thus refutes: —

"This consideration introduces at the same time what the ancients called the sophistry of indolence, which leads one to do nothing whatever. For, they say, if what I wish is fated to happen, it will happen, even if I do nothing; and if it is fated not to happen, it will never happen, no matter what trouble I may take. This necessity which is supposed to exist in events, independent of any cause, might be termed the *fatum mahometanum;* since it is said that a similar train of reasoning leads the Turks not to avoid places where a pestilence is raging. But the answer readily suggests itself: if the effect is certain, so is the cause which produces it; and if the effect is produced, it may be so by a proportionate cause. Thus your indolence may be the cause why you will not obtain any of the things which you desire, and you may suffer evils which you would have escaped by acting with care. We see that the union of causes with effects, far from producing an insupportable fatality, provides us rather with the means of avoiding this. There is a German proverb which says that death must always have a cause. Nothing can be truer. You will die to-day — supposing that this is fated and is foreseen — yes, undoubtedly; but it will be because you will do something that will cause your death. . . . The sophistry which leads men not to trouble themselves about any thing may, perhaps, be sometimes useful in inducing a certain kind of people to run blindly into danger. This has been seen especially in the case of Turkish soldiers, though it seems as if the Maslach had more to do with this than the sophistry. Moreover, this Turkish spirit of determination has not been greatly displayed in our days."

2. A second kind of fatalism is theological fatalism, or the doctrine of *predestination.* According to this, God determined beforehand the elect and the reprobate, the saints and the sinners, choosing the elect by an act of favor, and abandoning the others to eternal damnation. This doctrine,

by denying the existence of free will, involves the same inconvenient results as the former. In fact, if my destiny depends entirely on the choice and the will of God, what can I do to change it? or what need I fear? If I am one of the elect, I shall be saved anyhow: if I am one of the reprobate, nothing can prevent my ruin. Nothing is left but to cultivate absolute indifference to the results of the divine decrees. Besides, this doctrine gives God altogether too much the appearance of a tyrant, who acts from mere caprice, and who relies on his power, instead of on justice. But the doctrine of predestination was never maintained quite so strictly as is claimed: theologians have always admitted that there was, at least humanly speaking, some room for the exercise of free will.

3. The third kind of fatalism is the geometric, or Spinozian fatalism. According to Spinoza, all the phenomena of the universe, consequently all human actions, arise from the nature of things just as inevitably as the nature of the triangle arises from the equality of its three angles to two right angles. "According to this system," as Bayle says, "it was just as impossible from all eternity that Spinoza should die elsewhere than in the Hague as it is that two and two should make six." But, whatever Spinoza says, it may be doubted whether every thing in nature and in man is geometric. For instance, the charm which attracts us to pleasure has no analogy with the logical necessity which deduces one idea from another. Pleasure and pain are themselves immediate facts which cannot be compared with ideas, whether primitive or derivative. Suppose that it were even possible to find and demonstrate *à priori* the cause of pleasure, this would not suffice for one who was incapable of *feeling* the pleasure. He would be in a position like that of the blind Saunderson, who knew as well as anybody the geometric laws of light, but who had no idea of its sensation. If sight had been suddenly given to him, he would have experienced a new sensation, to which his geometric knowl-

edge of light would not have contributed in the least. Is it claimed that the logical explanation lies within the essence of the soul, and not in exterior causes? Granted; but no logic can ever give the intuition of one of the facts of sensibility to him who has never felt it. God himself may know the nature of pain, but he cannot know the fact of pain. Hence there are other laws than those of geometry. If this is true of sensibility, how much more true is it of the will. There is nothing in geometry resembling this. The triangle does not *wish* to have its three angles equal to two right angles. To say with Hegel that liberty is the consciousness of necessity — even supposing that this definition were correct — would be to introduce an idea foreign to pure mathematics, for consciousness is a fact which is foreign to mathematical laws: the triangle is not conscious of itself. In a word, consciousness, liberty, pleasure, and pain, are primitive facts, which cannot be logically deduced from any thing. Hence not every thing is subjected to a logical or mathematical necessity.

Having rejected the various systems which absolutely deny human liberty, and place man in the hands of God or of nature as a stick is placed in the hands of a man, "*sicut baculus*," the question arises whether we should class under the head of fatalism the system called *determinism*, which teaches that human, i.e., spiritual, as well as exterior actions, are subject to the law of cause and effect, and according to which actions are the inevitable results of the determining conditions which precede them — that is to say, of their motives. Some of those who advocate this doctrine deny the existence of a free will: others, like Leibnitz, believe that it is not irreconcilable with moral freedom.

Those who maintain that every sort of determinism is utterly opposed to freedom, are obliged to admit that the soul is capable of acting without a motive; that is, of choosing one side rather than another without any reason whatever. This is called *indifferent liberty*, or the *liberty*

of indifference. But however weak may be the influence which is attributed to motives, unless they have none at all, it must be admitted that they count for something in the determination of the will. Now, in order to refute this idea of the liberty of indifference, it is not necessary to prove that it is impossible: it suffices to show that it is useless. Indeed, of what use is it to prove that we are free in indifferent actions? The question of liberty never arises in reference to that sort of action, but only when the action has a moral character. Now, actions of this kind are never indifferent, and they always imply the existence of motives. For instance, I do evil only because I obey the impulses of passion; and I do good because I obey the commands of duty. Now, duty and passion are very certain and very perceptible motives for action. If it be proved that I am free when no motive exists, does it follow that I shall be so when motives are present? On the contrary, if the most perfect and self-evident freedom were that of a state of absolute equilibrium, does it not plainly follow that this freedom will diminish in proportion as this equilibrium disappears, and consequently in those very actions with which moral science is concerned, and in reference to which the existence of free will is claimed?

Hence we cannot assent to this liberty of indifference; and in rejecting this we thereby admit that the law of causality applies to the soul as well as to the body, and thus we accept a certain determinism. The question is, in what sense this shall be understood; for determinism has many forms. I recognize three species of it, which are, or seem to be, essentially different, or at least widely varying.

1. Imagine a billiard-ball impelled by another ball, this ball being driven forward by the cue, and this, in its turn, being set in motion by the hand of the player. The motion of each of these bodies is caused by the force exerted upon it by the body which comes in contact with it: there is a succession of movements, each of which is due to an anterior

movement. In this mechanical series, each body is subjected to the action of another body; it is influenced by a foreign and exterior body: and it is an established law of matter, that no body can begin, nor suspend, nor modify in swiftness or in direction, the movement imparted to it. Now, among human actions, there are some which are exactly like those I have just described. For instance, one whose hands were held and guided forcibly in the signature of a paper, or in giving a blow, would be like a stick in the hands of a traveller, or a stone cast out of a sling: he would no longer be an agent, but would be an instrument. This instrument incurs no responsibility whatever, any more than do the organs which are only the instruments of our wills.

"When the arm sins, the head is punished."

This first kind of determinism — that is, that in which the determining cause is exterior to the agent — is called constraint or violence; and there is no liberty whatever in it. To this kind of extrinsic and mechanical determinism belong all those states of the soul which have their immediate and sole cause, not merely in foreign bodies, but in the human body itself. Such, for instance, are the states of slumber, of madness, of delirium, in which man is under the control of his organs, just as he is, in the other cases, under that of exterior agents.

2. From this first kind of determinism, we must distinguish a second — that in which the determining cause is no longer an exterior agent, nor even the organs of the body, but is in the moral agent himself, and lies in his different psychological states. For instance, the man who obeys his own instincts and the innate tendencies of his nature — the instinct of self-preservation, the love of pleasure, the fear of pain — unquestionably cannot be called free. But he is one degree above those physical agents whose action is determined only by external causes, and is even above the state in which he finds himself when he is constrained by a force greater than his own to act contrary to his impulses. Exte-

rior constraint violates his will, and renders it useless: he follows his own inclinations voluntarily. He consents, he is their accomplice: and therefore he enjoys in that state a superior degree of liberty; though it is not entire, nor even true, liberty. But at least it is the image and the germ of this.

Here, then, we already have two widely different kinds of determinism — that in which the cause of the action is outside of the agent, which is *passivity;* and that in which the cause is within the agent himself, which is *activity*, or *spontaneity.*

8. But even spontaneity is not the highest degree of activity. Above instinctive or impulsive spontaneity (or the power of acting under the control of our natural impulses) stands rational spontaneity, or the power of acting in accordance with our ideas or conceptions. Psychological analysis teaches us that there are two kinds of phenomena within man: the phenomena of the sensibility — pleasures or pains, passions and sensations — and the phenomena of intelligence. The former are simple affections, or modifications which merely indicate the state of the soul at the moment when it is affected. The second always imply the existence of some object, and intelligence is essentially the faculty of representing an object to one's self. Hence it follows, that an act of intelligence, being *representative* or *contemplative*, can exercise no direct control over the will. Now, an idea, in so far as it represents an action to us as one which ought to be performed, is a *motive*, or, as Kant calls it, an *imperative.*[1] This imperative commands, but does not constrain. Thus, when we obey a motive of this sort, we feel that we are obliged to make an effort to constrain ourselves. Our will does not, of its own accord, tend toward the end which our understanding shows us. It is obliged to *exert* itself, to struggle with inclinations, to produce its own action by a sort of *creation ex nihilo* — at least, in the sense that the action does not always flow necessarily from an anterior state.

[1] No matter whether it is hypothetical or categorical.

This is liberty, which may be defined as *the power of acting in accordance with conceptions.* By the intervention of the understanding the will is emancipated: first, from exterior constraint; second, from the interior constraint of the impulses. It is, to use Kant's phrase, the power to initiate a movement. The interior sentiment of liberty is, then, that sentiment which we have of this power, which, although guided by the understanding, finds in itself alone the power to realize what the understanding proposes.

I therefore distinguish three different states, or modes, of action, and also three kinds of determinism:

1. The mode of action when the cause is outside of the agent — *external determinism*, or *passivity;*

2. The mode of action when the cause is internal, but is determined by the impulses — *internal determinism*, or *spontaneity;*

3. The mode of action when the cause is internal, but is determined by ideas — *rational determinism*, or *liberty.*

This third state is the one which we must study carefully, so that we may thoroughly understand its nature, and thus be enabled to answer the various objections which are made to liberty.

The definition of liberty which I have just given — the power of acting in accordance with conceptions or ideas — must not be confounded with similar ones; for instance, that given by Leibnitz, "Liberty is conscious spontaneity," or with that of Hegel, "Liberty is the understanding of necessity." These two definitions are undoubtedly correct, provided they are properly explained. But they are susceptible of several interpretations.

To act *consciously* may mean two things: it may be simply to act, being internally aware that one is acting; or it may mean to act with deliberation. In the first case, consciousness is merely the inner sense: in the second, it is reflection.

Now, in order that spontaneity may become liberty, it is not enough that it should be made perceptible to itself by

the inner sense, as this is done in a dream or in passion, and even, apparently, among animals. In beings endowed with sensibility, the impulses and tendencies are accompanied by consciousness, yet do not lose thereby their true character of fated spontaneity.

The case is altered when by *consciousness* we understand the fact of deliberating upon one's action, of knowing that one obeys passion, which could not be unless one had already distinguished between passion and reason. For it is only after having learned that passion is contrary, or conformable, either to our own good or to good in general, that we are able to comprehend passion as such, and to be conscious of it. Thus it is by the presence of an idea that passion becomes conscious of itself, that it recognizes and judges itself. In this second sense, to act spontaneously with consciousness, is to act in conformity with an idea.

Now, my theory differs from that of Leibnitz in this respect: he considers that the determining reason always lies within the inclination, and consciousness is merely an accompaniment of the action. According to my theory, on the contrary, there can be no liberty save on the condition that there was previously consciousness; that is, an ideal conception of the action. In my view, as in the common opinion, to be free is to act with a full knowledge of the reason, intentionally: liberty is when the will is directed toward the end represented by the mind, whether this end is pleasing to it, or not. In a word, in Leibnitz' view, consciousness of the action is merely consecutive: in mine it is antecedent. Having made this explanation, I will readily accept this abridged and exact formula: "Liberty is conscious spontaneity."

I interpret in the same way Hegel's formula that liberty is an "understood necessity." In one sense this formula is simply pure fatalism: in another, it resembles my theory. To define liberty as "the consciousness of necessity" would, indeed, be equivalent to the proclamation of fatalism. Suppose, for instance, that a triangle could become conscious

of itself, and could understand the logical necessity which combines its characteristics with its nature: evidently it would be a misuse of terms to call it free for this reason.

But in one way it may be admitted that the consciousness of necessity abrogates the necessity. If one understands that an evil is inevitable, and resigns himself to it, he is no longer the slave of a mere brutish necessity; he is no longer submissive to fate; he is now submissive to reason. For example, to accept death as inevitable because it results from the nature of things, is to be free from death. To fear it, is to be its slave. He who dies in spite of himself, resisting death, is struck down by it as a slave by a master. He who understands that it is necessary — that is to say, reasonable — consents to die. He is then free as regards death. If he goes farther, and sees in death, not merely a necessary result of the laws of life, but the intentional act of a foreseeing will, in accepting this act with the understanding that Providence assigns it to him, he emancipates himself from fate.

But, if the first degree of liberty is the free acceptance of a necessity, the commanding of that necessity is a still higher degree. For instance, so far as they obey their instincts without comprehending them, the animals are under the yoke of necessity. But, so soon as we rise to a comprehension of this necessity of the inclinations, we are thereby emancipated from it; for henceforth, instead of yielding to them like the brutes, we learn to follow them with judgment, choosing the way in which they shall be sacrificed, and making the satisfaction of some subordinate to that of other more noble ones. In the same way we become masters of nature by understanding the necessity of natural laws. In each of these cases, liberty is the power of acting according to ideas.

But from this definition arise difficulties which it is necessary to solve. If liberty is the power of being guided by reason, does it not follow that we are not free when, instead

of listening to the voice of reason, we obey that of passion? Now, if man is not free to obey or disobey passion, how can he be responsible for what he does? Should we not then be forced to say with Plato, that wickedness is involuntary? or with the physiologists, that crime or vice is merely a madness, and that the wicked man should be cured, not punished; that he is both guilty and innocent, or, rather, that there are no guilty men, but only unfortunates?

It would be no answer to this to reply that common parlance coincides with this hypothesis. For is it not said of a man who is under the yoke of his passions, that passion is slavery? that a man in this condition no longer belongs to himself, is no longer his own master, which seems to indicate that he is not free? But, in speaking thus, it is generally understood that the yoke is voluntarily assumed, that the slavery is accepted willingly; and this is what makes it disgraceful: otherwise it would only be unfortunate. A prisoner loaded with chains is not ashamed of them; but a slave who could free himself, and does not care to do so, deserves contempt. Thus, there may be a voluntary servitude, to use La Boëtie's expression; and therefore, while recognizing the fact that the passions impose servitude upon us, the general opinion of mankind, nevertheless, regards this as a servitude which is free in its principle, accepted and desired in its consequences, and consequently culpable.

The question then rises again: how can one be free in his passion if liberty consists in acting in accordance with ideas?

I reply: so far as we are passionate, we are not free in our passion. An angry man is not free so long as he is angry. But he is free in so far as he knows that anger is a vice which is injurious to him and to others. So soon as this idea presents itself to his mind, the fatal force of his passion is gone. I see clearly that I can obey reason. But, under these circumstances, to be able to obey reason is to be able to resist passion. However, as passion is a force which tends to draw me in the opposite direction from that indi-

cated by reason, it follows that I can obey the latter only by an effort which will counteract the influence of the former. It is the consciousness of this effort, this tension of myself against myself (a tension which would be impossible but for the presence of the idea), which constitutes the conviction that the will is free. For, on the one hand, so long as I resist, I feel clearly that I can resist (*ab actu ad posse*); but, on the other hand, I feel, that, if I were to abandon this effort for a single instant, passion would suddenly take possession of me. Now, it is quite clear that I could cease making this exertion; for it is easier to suspend a fatiguing effort than to continue it. I then perceive within me, to use Aristotle's words, a power which includes opposites. Now, this is liberty.

Let us not forget the distinction already made between two kinds, or rather two degrees, of liberty — liberty as an *end*, and liberty as a *means*. To be perfectly reasonable is to be perfectly free: this is liberty as an end. To be capable of resisting one's inclinations, or of yielding to them, is liberty regarded as a means, or free will. But, in reality, these two kinds of liberty are but one; for it is only by being already reasonable, that I feel myself capable of becoming more so. It is because I am already free, that I can make an effort to become freer — that is to say, to reach the point where I shall no longer need to make an effort. Liberty attests itself to me by difficulty, but its ideal is in perfect facility. In so far as liberty is difficult, I find myself divided and hesitating; I feel myself capable of choice and of preference; I weigh, I compare, I deliberate. This intermediate state is that which is called free will.

All the difficulties raised by my definition of liberty have not yet been answered.

If free will consists, as has just been said, in the effort which we make to resist our inclinations, what shall be said of men who are incapable of such an effort; who not only do not continue it, but who do not even ever undertake it?

Then, they are not free; consequently they are not responsible; and this would seem to be the condition of the majority of men.

It must, indeed, be admitted as a fact proved by experience, that men are not all capable of making the same efforts; that they have not what is called an equal will-power. Certainly, not every man would be able quietly to let his hand burn away in the fire as did Mucius Scevola. How many men have been unable to endure the torture! There are strong souls and weak souls: common sense bears testimony to this. Hence comes that general indulgence for the weaknesses of particular men — while condemning vice in general — which morality and religion agree in recommending to us. "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Now, the liberty of each individual comes from the strength which he is capable of exerting in resisting his inclinations. This strength varies with the individual. Hence we must conclude that free will differs with the individual, that there are degrees of liberty, that liberty is not absolute, and finally, that each one is morally responsible only according to the measure of his liberty — a doctrine which is in perfect harmony with all the habits and judgments of common sense.

But, if all men have not the same power of resistance to their inclinations, does it follow that they have no power at all? If each is capable of a certain degree of effort, is not this enough to make him free? And does not our inner experience prove to each one of us, that, however weak we may be, we are never so feeble as to be utterly incapable of resisting any of our inclinations? Now, from this first degree of capability of effort, we may raise ourselves to a second, from that to another, and, rising step by step, may attain a moral strength which we should at first have believed impossible. Do not all moralists agree in teaching us that we must resist evil at the beginning, *principiis obsta*, attack it by degrees, not defer the conflict until the passion has become irresistible, etc.? Is not this an admission that

there is here no question of seeking to claim for man a chimerical liberty, which should triumph over nature unreservedly, without proportion or degree; but rather a reasonable liberty, which, constantly exercised, rises from one degree to another by continuous effort?

The theory that liberty consists in acting in accordance with ideas gives rise to two other important difficulties.

The first is, that man never acts in accordance with an abstract idea, and that some inclination, whether perceived or not, always mingles with the motives which reason furnishes.

The second is, that, when there are two inclinations, the strongest, which Leibnitz calls the *prevalent*, inclination always carries the day. In other words, it is one of the traditional maxims of the schools, that "the will always follows the greatest good."

I grant the first maxim. No man has ever acted in accordance with pure reason, just as he has never had knowledge of any thing by pure reason. Some inclination is always mingled with our motives, just as some image from the sensitive world is always mingled with our conceptions. But if reason does not form the whole of our motives, even in our most excellent actions, does it follow that it has no part in them, or that it may not form their essential part, that which gives the act its true character? If reason has any share in our determinations, that is enough to emancipate our will. Hence we can draw no conclusions adverse to liberty from this first maxim. All the difficulty — and it is very grave — lies in the second.

This maxim, "The will always follows the greatest good," seems in a certain sense self-evident. Plato was much struck with this idea, and he has expressed it several times in his writings: —

"No one [he says] will voluntarily seek evil, or what he believes to be evil. It is not in the nature of man that he should seek after evil instead of after good. If forced to choose between two evils, no one would choose the greater if he had power to choose the lesser."

From this principle Plato drew the conclusion, that, when men do evil, it is through ignorance of the true good; and that it is a popular error to think that man can know the good, and do the evil. On the contrary, let him once know good as such, and it is impossible that the will should not turn toward it; and, when there are two goods of unequal value, it will choose that which is known to be the better.

Locke, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, argues admirably against the opinion just cited: —

"This, I think, any one may observe in himself and others, that the *greater sensible good* does not always raise one's *desire*, in proportion to the greatness it appears, and is acknowledged to have; though every little trouble moves us, and sets us on work to get rid of it. The reason whereof is evident from the nature of our *happiness* and *misery* itself. All present pain whatever it may be, makes a part of our present *misery;* but all absent good does not at any time make a necessary part of our present *happiness*, nor the absence of it make a part of our *misery*. If it did, we should be constantly and infinitely miserable; there being infinite degrees of happiness which are not in our possession. All *uneasiness*, therefore, being removed, a moderate portion of good serves at present to content man . . . they could be content to stay here forever, though they cannot deny but that there may be a state of eternal durable joys after this life, far surpassing all the good that is to be found here . . . yet they bound their happiness within some little enjoyment or aim of this life, and exclude the joys of heaven from making any necessary part of it: their desires are not moved by this greater apparent good, nor their *wills* determined to any action or endeavor for its attainment."[1]

Locke concludes that we are not induced to act by a view of the greatest good, but that present *uneasiness* inspires in us an inclination to free ourselves from it. Thus, he says, the wise Author of our being has subjected men to the inconveniences of hunger, thirst, and the other natural desires, so as to excite and determine wills to the preservation of themselves, and to the continuation of their species. He cites, in closing, the *video meliora proboque*, and concludes by saying, that it is not the greatest good, but the *most pressing uneasiness*, which always wins the day.

[1] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, B. ii., chap. 21, § 44.

Leibnitz admits that "these considerations have weight," yet he thinks that we should not abandon the maxim of the greatest good.

"The reason why true goods are so little sought is [according to him], because in this case most of our thoughts are empty, without perception or sentiment, and consist in the barren employment of characters, just as in the case of those who make algebraic calculations without regarding the geometric figures. In this case words have the same effect that arithmetical or algebraic characters do in the other; we often reason merely verbally, without having the object before our minds. Thus men generally think about God, virtue, and felicity: they speak and reason without distinct ideas. . . . Thus if we prefer the worse, it is because we feel the good which it contains, while feeling neither the evil that is present, nor the good which is contained in the opposite course."[1]

This habit of repeating formulas, the meaning of which is not present in the imagination, Leibnitz calls *psittacism* (talking like a parrot). He is fond of this expression, and even applies it to the belief of the majority of men in regard to the future life.

"This is partly [he says] because men are not really convinced; and whatever they say a secret incredulity dwells in the depths of their hearts. . . . Few people like to admit that a future life is possible. Their thoughts about it are merely *psittacism*, or are gross and empty dreams like those of the Mahometans. . . . Cicero has somewhere well observed that, if our senses could but perceive the beauty of virtue, they would love it ardently. But as neither this nor any thing equivalent to it happens, it is no cause for surprise if the spirit succumbs so frequently in the combat between the flesh and the spirit, since it does not properly appreciate its advantages."

From this analysis, Leibnitz concludes that Locke's observations, although just, in no way contradict the maxim of the greatest good.

I will say, of all that I have just quoted, what Leibnitz says of Locke: "There is something solid and beautiful in these considerations." And just as Leibnitz accepts the observations of Locke, giving them his own interpretation, we may

[1] Leibnitz, *Nouv. Essais*, B. ii., chap. 21.

also recognize the justice of Lei observations, while seeking to interpret them in confor 'h our principles.

It is certain that the will is always persuaded by some good, and cannot be so by an evil. No one will willingly consent to be unhappy. Plato is right in saying this. If I perform an action whose results menace my happiness, my future life, my eternal happiness, it certainly is not because I expressly desire that misfortune, however inevitable it may seem to my mind. I do not desire evil for the sake of evil, but I yield to some present attraction which is a good.

But while I admit that the will is never persuaded except by some good, there still remain the queries: 1. Whether it always seeks the greatest good; 2. Whether, supposing that it does this, it is possible to affirm, as an equivalent proposition, that the strongest inclination always carries the day; 3. Whether, finally, if we accept this last hypothesis, liberty does not still remain.

We see how many distinct ideas we have here to disentangle.

The whole force of the equivocation lies in the word good, which has several different meanings.

Sometimes it signifies *present good*, the pleasure and the immediate attraction which inclines us toward it.

Sometimes it signifies *future good*, or interest, the sum of the goods which life has to offer us, and which together compose what is called happiness. And although these future goods may actually be resolved into pleasures, just as real as the present ones, yet it is certain that future pleasure, represented by the imagination, is rarely so vivid as that which is actual and present.

Finally, the word good may mean the universal *general good*, the interest of other men, or even the interest of the universal society which unites us with men and with God. Here we no longer have to do with a good belonging to the sensitive world, but with one which is not even personal.

Now, from these definitions it follows that the maxim of

the greatest good is an equivocal one. For it may mean either that the will is always determined by the greatest actual good, or by the greatest personal good, or by the greatest general and universal good.

Now, experience shows that it is not true that men always seek present goods in preference to future goods, or those that are personal rather than the universal good. And, conversely, it is not always true that men prefer the greatest general good to their own personal good, nor the greatest personal good to their present and sensitive good.

Thus the maxim does not seem to be true in the two meanings which may be attributed to it.

In defending it, two interpretations are given, which, although different, are frequently united, and which Leibnitz seems often to have confounded.

It may be observed that these three kinds of heterogeneous goods have yet something in common, and we may attempt to reduce them to a sort of common denominator. This something in common is the attraction which they have for us, and the idea of the pleasures which they promise us. Now, it may happen that a pleasure, even when nearly ideal, will be more charming to us than another actual and present pleasure; and consequently its attraction will be greater. Thus, by directing our imagination toward the future pleasure, we may weaken the power of that which is present; and we may do the same as to pain. So, too, the idea of the good of others, or of good in general, may be so vivid that we shall find more pleasure in it than in our personal good. So soon, then, as the attraction of such a pleasure becomes stronger than that of the present pleasure, the will will inevitably follow it. For example, pious and charitable souls actually find more pleasure in prayer and self-devotion than in all the pleasures of the senses. In a cold and egotistical man the love of life will be stronger than the inclination to intemperance. In the first sense, the maxim of the greatest good signifies that the soul will always pursue *the*

greatest good that is felt; that is to say, the prevalent attraction, or the strongest attraction. Here the standard is given by the sensibility. This is what Leibnitz means.

Taken in another sense, the maxim in question means that the will always follows *the greatest good known.* Here the maxim is borrowed from the intelligence, and this is what Plato means.

In this latter sense the idea is evidently inadmissible; for it is only too true, that we know the good and do the evil. Here we may recall, with Locke, the *video meliora.* . . . If the actual state of our sensibility but renders actual good or evil more vivid, this is enough to lead us to sacrifice future good, even when we recognize its character; and this is true of our own personal good, as well as of good in general. For instance, if one is put to the torture, and knows that his life depends on the courage with which he endures it, it avails little for him to know that the endurance of an actual and transitory evil will suffice to preserve his life, which is evidently the greater good. It is very possible that he will not have the courage to prefer this greater good, though known and certain, to the negative and transitory good of being delivered from the torture.

The question, then, assumes this form: Does the will always follow the greatest good of sensibility? Or may it, on the contrary, prefer the greatest intellectual good to the greatest good of sensibility? Can we choose that which is the greatest good in itself, even though it may not be also our greatest pleasure? I reply with Kant: I can, for I ought. This is the moral problem itself. Either the idea of moral obligation means nothing at all, or it means just this. Moreover, we must not here lose sight of the important scholastic distinction between *anticipatory* and *consequent* pleasures. Every act, as we have already said in agreement with Aristotle, is accompanied by pleasure; but every act is not necessarily determined by pleasure. We may picture to ourselves in the coldest and weakest manner

the pleasures of conscience, and yet may act from conviction of the right.

But let us proceed farther: what is the love of the greatest good? And, speaking generally, what is love? Does love necessarily exclude liberty? Certainly not. Love is not the blind impulse of the sensibility: it is the pleasure which is superadded to the idea of an object, according to Spinoza's profound definition. Love is, then, inseparable from knowledge. Love is distinct from appetite; or, rather, it is the rational appetite (*appetitus rationalis*), as the scholastics called it. In true love, the idea is always mingled with the pleasure. He who obeys such a love will, then, obey reason at the same time: it is thus that he is free.

Imagine, then, a man who loves both good and pleasure, but sacrifices the latter to the former. Must we say that he obeys the *strongest* of his inclinations? No: I say that he obeys the *best* of the two. There is no common measure for love and appetite, and these two inclinations cannot be weighed in the same balances: otherwise it would be impossible to explain why virtue is difficult, or the effort which it costs to gain the victory over the passions. Now these are facts which it is impossible to deny, and which every one can verify for himself in the simplest way. It is painful, and costs us something, to deprive ourselves of a pleasure, however small it may be. How would this be possible if we never obeyed any but the *strongest* of our inclinations? When we knowingly prefer a greater to a lesser pleasure, we feel no sentiment of constraint: we do it with *pleasure*. How does it happen, then, that there are cases when such a choice is accompanied by *pain?* How can it be painful and grievous for me to strive for my greatest pleasure? This would be incomprehensible. In reality, the case is not so simple as it is made to appear. Here there is not the clashing of two inclinations of the same kind, with the same standard: in such a case we should have no difficulty in sacrificing the lesser of the two. But when you sacrifice a present to a future

pleasure — the first, warm, vivid, tempting, and immediate; the second, cold, distant, perhaps uncertain — unquestionably you have here two pleasures; but they cannot be measured by the same scale. Ask Bentham himself if certainty will bear comparison with intensity. If I prefer the most certain pleasure to the one which is most vivid, it is plainly because reason adds its own weight to the balance. It is the same when of two pleasures I prefer the better to the more vivid; or refinement, nobility, and dignity, to intensity. Thus we come back to our fundamental distinction between what is good in itself, and what is good for our sensibility; between good in itself and relative good; between true pleasures and those that are false. It is because we judge one pleasure to be truer than another that we choose it, but this does not necessarily imply that it is actually the most vivid and the most attractive. Hence such a choice is difficult, and the effort which it costs us is what we call liberty.

Above this liberty which consists in effort, we have seen that there is another which is superior to effort, which is the pure love of good, without constraint, and without pain. But this is, in a certain sense, the reward of the other. It is the liberty of the wise man or the saint: it can hardly be said to belong to our sphere.

CHAPTER VII.

KANT'S THEORY OF LIBERTY.

NO philosopher has penetrated more deeply than Kant into what a theologian of the sixteenth century called the *labyrinth of the free will.*[1] None has made greater efforts to find his way through it. Let us examine the profound and original theory of liberty which this philosopher has given us.

In Kant's opinion, liberty is the faculty of initiating a series of movements: it is the power of producing a change which is not determined by any anterior change. Hence it is an initial, spontaneous cause—a first cause. Undoubtedly liberty is not the first cause, the Supreme Being: it implies secondary substances. But these secondary substances, in so far as they can be called free, are first causes, like the Supreme Being; that is, they are causes which produce a series of movements without being determined to this by any thing anterior. These causes are, then, exempt from the general law of causality, according to which every thing that is produced is determined by some antecedent phenomenon. Now, this law of causality is, according to Kant, a universal law of nature. Hence comes this antinomy: either there is liberty, in which case the law of causality, which Leibnitz called the principle of sufficient reason, suffers a notable exception, and nature no longer forms a unit, while science and experience no longer hold a guiding clew; or else the law of causality is universal, and without

[1] Ochin, *Labyrinthus Liberi Arbitrii.* See the analysis of this curious book in Ad. Garnier's *Traité des Facultés de l'Ame* (l. v., c. i., § 6).

any exception, in which case there is no liberty, and consequently no morality, since morality is indissolubly connected with the idea of liberty.

It may be said, indeed, that liberty is in no way opposed to the principle of causality; since every free action certainly has a cause, which is, the will that produces it. A free act does not, then, come out of nothingness: it issues from the free causality which potentially contains it. Consequently the axiom, *ex nihilo nihil*, does not apply here. But Leibnitz has observed that the mere principle of causality is not sufficient, and that we must add to it the principle of reason. In fact, in order that an effect may be produced, it is not enough that the power to produce it should be presupposed: this power must also have some reason for doing it, by which it will be aroused and led to perform this action rather than some other one. For, if this power is supposed to be equally indifferent to two contrary actions, we may, indeed, have something which explains the possibility of action in general, but we have nothing which explains the choice of a certain action in particular: this requires the principle of reason. A phenomenon without a reason is, then, a phenomenon without a cause. Now, whether we consider psychological or physical phenomena, we cannot in either case comprehend an action without a cause. A power to decide without any reason is merely chance: it is the negation of all science. On the other hand, however, universal determinism is the negation of morality. Thus the antinomy remains, and we cannot escape it by means of any of the accepted hypotheses. To get rid of this, Kant proffers an hypothesis of his own.

He finds the solution in his theory of transcendental idealism. According to this, time, space, and causality are not the laws of things in themselves, but they are the laws of our sensibility and of our understanding, in so far as we think of external things. The world as it is in itself, or the *intelligible* world, is essentially different from the world as it appears to us, or the *sensitive* world. The latter is only a

phenomenon: in themselves things are neither in space, nor in time, nor subject to the laws of necessary causation. Assuredly we do not know these things as they are in themselves; but we have at least this negative idea of them which excludes all the modes of our sensibility, with which the ideas of our understanding are united. In this theory Kant sees the solution of the problem of liberty.

If things taken in themselves were indeed such as they appear to us, he says, then they could not be freed from the universal law of nature, which is the law of causation. If man, such as he knows himself by experience, were man as he is in himself; if, to use Kant's phraseology, the *homo phenomenon* were identical with the *homo noumenon* — it would not be possible to affirm the existence of the free will; for man, as a phenomenon, is subject to the same law which governs all other phenomena, which is, the law of sufficient reason; and all his interior modifications are determined the one by the other, according to the same law as external modifications. But so soon as we distinguish the *noumenon* from the *phenomenon* — the thing in itself from the thing as manifested in time and space — the antinomy disappears. There is no longer any reason for applying the laws of one to the other: it is no contradiction for a thing which is in itself free, to appear to be subjected, in its exterior manifestations, to the purely subjective law of causation; consequently an action which appears in its sensitive and exterior effects to be determined, may be free in its principle.

To understand this theory of Kant's perfectly, it is necessary to remember that he distinguishes two kinds of causation — *intelligible* and *empirical* causation. One of these is exercised outside of space and time: the other, on the contrary, is bound by the conditions of space and time. It is only empirical causation which, for the very reason that it is exercised within time, is subject to the law of universal determination. It is because its effects are manifested within the limits of time that they necessarily determine one

another, as do the moments of time. The law of sufficient reason, which Leibnitz supposed to be a law of things in themselves, is, then, merely a law of *phenomena*, or *empirical* causation; that is to say, of things as they appear, and not of things as they really are. Kant denies the objectivity of empirical, not of intelligible, causation; and his ontological scepticism may be reduced to this proposition: The determinism of Leibnitz is a subjective illusion of the mind, which renders morality impossible by making freedom impossible.

Kant certainly does not affirm (from the metaphysical point of view) the objective reality of intelligible causation, but neither does he deny it. There is no complete knowledge, save such as comes from experience: all knowledge is derived from the union of an *à priori* idea and the intuitions of the sensitive faculties; without this intuition there can be no experience, and consequently no knowledge. Now, intelligible causation cannot be apprehended by the intuition of the sensitive faculties, consequently it cannot be a matter of experience; hence it cannot be *known*, but it can be *thought;* and, although we may not be able to affirm that it is *real*, we can at least say that it is possible. In a word, it involves no contradiction. If, then, we come to see in another field that it is necessary, we may, without fear of violating the laws of reason, affirm that it exists. Now, morality requires liberty. Hence liberty, which is metaphysically possible, is practically necessary. Thus practical reason establishes, in what is called an *apodictic* (demonstrative) manner, what pure reason had left as simply *problematical.*

The question still remains, how one and the same being — that is, a man — can be at the same time free and a slave — free as an intelligible causality, a slave as an empirical causality; free in the field of noumena, a slave in that of phenomena. This is the knot of the problem. If the noumenon and phenomenon were two distinct beings within man (like the soul and the body), it would not be difficult to comprehend that man might be free from one point of view

and a slave from another. The only difficulty would be how to connect the two — a difficulty which is found in every system. But here the difficulty is much greater, for the phenomenon is simply the expression of the noumenon. The man as a phenomenon is, then, identical with the man as a noumenon: he is the same being regarded from another stand-point. If this is so, how can he be free in one sense, and a slave in another?

Kant admits that his solution is very obscure, but he asks if any clearer one can be given. So far as it can be understood, his explanation may be summarized as follows. The conditions according to which things *manifest* themselves, do not alter the conditions according to which these same things *act*. Even if we consider a subject as *manifesting itself to itself*, the manner of its appearing does not at all affect the manner of action of the subject *abstractly considered*. A subject may manifest itself to itself with the appearance of fatality, and yet really act with perfect freedom. Fatality belongs to the mode of appearance: liberty belongs to the inmost essence of the being. For instance, an action may be one in its principle and essence, and be manifold in its mode of manifestation. It will then be both manifold and one without any contradiction. Thus a cry may be uttered in a sonorous vault, and repeated by all the echoes of the vault: you utter but one sound, you hear a hundred. Each of these is determined according to physical laws by those preceding it, and all taken together are determined by the laws of echo, or of the reflection of sounds. The physicist can measure mathematically and with precision every moment of the phenomenon; but these measures apply only to the sound manifested, not to the sound produced. Hence it may be regarded as being controlled by fate in its manifestation, while it is free in its origin. Thus, for example, if it is an appeal for help, a call to arms, an insult, or a prayer, the moralist may attribute to the sound, abstractly considered, a moral value, while the physicist will see in the sound

as manifested only a phenomenon governed by mathematical laws. This is certainly but a rude image; but it will illustrate to a certain extent how one and the same action can be controlled by fate, and yet be free.

To make the explanation clearer, let us penetrate more deeply into the distinction between the phenomenon and the noumenon as this applies to man. Let us imagine a man looking at himself in a mirror. The man is the noumenon: his reflection in the glass is the phenomenon. Here the cause is the man. From a certain point of view, and in a certain sense, every thing that is in the man is expressed in his image. The mirror may modify in a thousand ways this primitive figure; but, in doing so, it must always respect the type which is furnished to it; and, however much the image may differ from the model, there will not be a single point in the image which is not derived from the model; but it is evident that the laws which control the reflection of the image in the mirror do not apply to the man himself, and do not in any way modify his nature. For instance, if my face appears longer or broader in a mirror, it does not follow that it will be really long or broad. Imagine, then, a mirror in which my actions could be represented according to a certain universal, determining law: it does not follow that my actions abstractly considered would be under the control of such a law.

Now, this is what takes place. Man has an internal mirror which we call consciousness, by which he is shown to himself; and, in so far as he is shown to himself, he is, as Kant says, *affected by himself*. He can perceive himself only in accordance with the conditions of his own faculties of sensibility, a sort of internal mirror, which modifies his real features: thus he sees only the image of himself. Now, what is the fundamental condition of the faculties of sensibility? It is time. Hence he perceives himself only under the condition of time.

But beside, or rather above, this consciousness of the sen-

sibility, which he calls the *empirical* consciousness, there is another consciousness which he calls *pure*, or perception *à priori*. This is the consciousness of myself as a thinking being: it is the consciousness of the understanding and of its necessary conceptions. Thus man is the union of a double consciousness — pure and empirical. He is, according to Kant's definition, "an understanding which appears to itself under the form of time." Understanding differs essentially from the faculties of sensibility. The latter are passive; sensibility is simply the *capacity* for being affected; it is a *receptivity*. Understanding is an active faculty, producing conceptions: it is a *spontaneity*. Man, so far as he preserves the consciousness of being an understanding, is conscious of his spontaneity, his activity, and his causality; and, as this is the very thing that distinguishes the world of the intelligible from that of the sensitive, Kant goes so far as to say that "we are conscious of forming a part of the intelligible world." Finally — although Kant's system is not generally regarded from this point of view — it is certain, that with him, man, regarded as an understanding, is a thing in himself; and, since he is conscious of his understanding, he is therefore conscious of himself as being a thing in himself. Only, this understanding (which is the thing in itself) cannot perceive itself save under the conditions of the faculties of sensibility — that is, within time; but, abstractly considered, it is not subject to the law of time.

This is the core of Kant's theory of liberty: from this comes the determinism of phenomena, which is due to the law of time, and to this law alone. It is only as being within time that a phenomenon cannot occur without being *anteriorly* preceded by some other phenomenon. Eliminate time, and you eliminate this condition. Intelligible causality does not imply any thing anterior to itself, because for it there is no such thing as anterior. Hence it is emancipated from all servitude as regards nature; being entirely spontaneous, it implies nothing but itself; this is what is

called liberty. Unquestionably all phenomena, in so far as they arise one after the other, presuppose a law. Each one in particular is determined by the preceding one, and, from this point of view, is governed by fate. But taken all together, as a whole, they are the expression, the manifestation of a spontaneous or free causality. All have their origin in the understanding, or reason; that is to say, in that part of man which constitutes intelligible causality. "Phenomena," says Kant, "express reason *empirically:* reason contains phenomena *intelligibly.*"

Thus we see how phenomena may be at once *determined*, and yet *free.* They are determined so far as they relate one to another: they are free, taken as a whole, as the expression of reason is intelligible causality. "Reason," says Kant, "is *identically* present in all actions: it is the complete cause of each one of them."

Kant's solution consists, then, in admitting the contemporaneousness of reason with the whole series of acts which compose the phenomenal life of man. This series — manifold, successive, divisible, because it exists within time — is the expression of a simple and single act which exists outside of time. This simple and immanent act, not being preceded by any thing, is spontaneous, therefore free. The phenomena which proceed from it are, therefore, free also.

Thus, in Kant's view, it is not one special action or another which is free, but it is the totality of our actions taken as a unit. Responsibility belongs to the whole life, and not to single actions. Another German philosopher, who has more fully developed this point of Kant's theory — Schopenhauer — says that it is not in the *fieri* (the becoming) that man is free: it is in the *esse* (the being). Such as he is, such he becomes: but what he is, he is freely; he is so, because he wishes it. A corrupt tree cannot produce good fruit: a bad man will not produce good actions; since he is wicked, every thing in him is vicious; but it was he himself who chose to be wicked.

Kant finds a confirmation of his theory in popular opinion; for instance, in the hatred which we all feel for depraved natures, even when they appear so from their early childhood, and, so to speak, in the very cradle. Doubtless each of the acts by which this precocious wickedness is manifested is fated, in the sense that it is determined by the wicked and depraved instincts of the individual. Nevertheless, the moral consciousness protests against these, as well as against other guilty persons. Every day, before our tribunals, criminals are assailed, being represented as having the worst of instincts, as being monsters; yet their responsibility is thought to be aggravated, not diminished, by this. Thus they are truly culpable, though their wickedness is innate.

Consequently Kant admits the existence of what he calls a sort of *radical* sin; that is, each one of us, before his birth, or rather without reference to his birth, chooses, by a sort of absolute decree, to be either good or evil. If we inquire why the reason decides in one way rather than another, Kant replies, that it is useless to seek the *why*. We cannot go back of a first cause: the essence of things is unknown to us. To ask why the reason decides, is to regard it as determinate, not determinating. Here we have a sort of primitive *fiat* — a free and voluntary predestination, the mystery of which cannot be solved by any human science. This is also the starting-point of religion.

The profundity and originality of this system are incontestable; but it may be remarked that it eliminates the difficulties of other systems by substituting new ones, and that it finally leaves the problem in the same state in which it was found.

The first difficulty is, that, in this theory, it is impossible to distinguish acts that are free from those that are not so. Kant admits that each one of our actions, so far as it is connected with the preceding ones, with mutables, circumstances, and accidents, which determine it, is necessary — just as

necessary as are physical phenomena: but all, taken together, are the expression of what Kant calls "reason;" that is, of an absolute spontaneity, or of an incomprehensible act of liberty. If this is true, should not all phenomena, without exception, be regarded as the expression of this primitive act of liberty? Is not the man as a phenomenon, taken as a whole, no more in one action than in another, the expression of the will of the man as a noumenon? He is, then, wholly free, and wholly a slave: he is free as to his intelligible origin; he is a slave as a phenomenon of the world of sense. But, even in the sensuous world itself, we cannot distinguish that which is free from that which is not free. What principle of distinction could be here applied? Why should not the intelligible man — that is to say, reason, which Kant declares to be "identically present in all phenomena" — be the cause of some? And whence do the others come? If we admit that certain phenomena — such, for instance, as acts performed in a state of delirium — are neither free nor imputable, because they are determined irrevocably by the antecedent circumstances, why should other actions — such, for instance, as a lie or a murder, which are, by the hypothesis, determined just as irrevocably, in so far as they are phenomena — why should these be regarded as free in respect to their noumenal origin? Do not all phenomena have a noumenal origin, and is not this the same for all? Thus Kant's hypothesis furnishes us with no criterion by which to distinguish which of our actions are free, and which are not so. Now, it is certain that human consciousness recognizes a difference between them. It gives absolution for acts committed during sleep, in a delirium, in madness, and in idiocy, as being irresponsible; and even if we should accept the distinction made by the Stoics between two classes of men, wise men and fools, the difficulty would still remain, in regard to the majority of mankind, who pass frequently from one state to another, if only in sleep and in illness. Not only does Kant decline to explain this difficulty, but his system even excludes what

is affirmed by the practical conscience; that is, degrees of responsibility. For since he regards all our acts, without exception, as being absolutely determined in so far as they are mutable, he cannot admit that one is any more so than another; and as he has nothing at his disposal whereby to save liberty except a desperate resort — that is, an incomprehensible, absolute act, common to the whole series of phenomena which compose a human life — I do not see how this primitive act could be manifested in one phenomenon any more than in another; nor, consequently, how the responsibility could be greater or less in any given case.

But still another class of difficulties is involved in this hypothesis. The law of causality, which Kant declares to be absolute, demands that every phenomenon, even if psychological, shall be determined by an anterior phenomenon. Each of our actions is, therefore, the inevitable result of those preceding it; and, as we have just seen, if they are to be considered as free in any sense, this is only by regarding them as a whole; in this sense, each individual one is free, so far as it forms an integral part of a whole which has the character of freedom. But, in passing thus from action to action, do we not ultimately reach a first phenomenon, which is the initial of the series, and the generator of all? This phenomenon is, for each man, contemporaneous with his birth, with the manifestation of his being, at whatever moment this birth or apparition may be fixed. Now, even if I admit, that as a noumenon, as understanding, as liberty — all which are identical in Kant's view — I am outside of time, like the God of scholastic theology, yet as a phenomenon, as a concrete and individual man, as Peter or Paul, my life had a beginning in time. Here, then, is an ultimate phenomenon, or one which is so relatively to me.

Here we encounter an alternative, both of whose terms are equally inadmissible. On the one hand, I may, in accordance with practical consciousness, separate my individual responsibility — that is to say, my liberty — from that of all who have

preceded me — my parents and ancestors. But, in this case, I have a primitive phenomenon which is derived exclusively from my own liberty, and is completely detached from every thing which precedes it. There is a hiatus between the first initial phenomenon of my individual life and all anterior phenomena, even those which occur in the environment within which I took birth — in the maternal womb. Thus there is a rupture of the universal series, and the law of causality is violated by the introduction of a free cause into the chain of phenomena. But, if such a cause could break this chain at the beginning of my life, why can it not break it as readily under other circumstances? Thus the principle of universal determinism is overthrown.

On the other hand, if the law of causality must be maintained without exception and without reserve, then it must be admitted that the first phenomenon of my life is necessarily determined by the phenomena of a life anterior to my own; this life itself is similarly connected with an anterior life; and the genealogical tree of each of us must be considered as one and the same life, continuous and indivisible, each phenomenon of which is necessarily determined by the preceding one. Thus it can be called free only as we consider the entire series, from the very first man on, as emanating from one and the same cause. Thus I must go back of my own liberty, back, even, of the liberty of my parents, to find a cause that is truly free. All liberties and all responsibilities must be absorbed in one single liberty and responsibility.

Hence one of two things must be true: either my personal responsibility is merged in the responsibility of the human race in general; or else, on the contrary, all human responsibilities are merged in mine. In the first case, what is the moral value of a responsibility which pertains to men in general, and not to me in particular? What greater objection can there be to fatalism itself? In the second case, I shall be responsible for every thing that has been

done before my life began: I shall be personally responsible for the murder of Cæsar, and for the conspiracy of Catiline. This hypothesis is even more absurd than the former one, and destroys just as effectually all moral responsibility.

Furthermore, humanity itself was not created out of nothing by an act of spontaneous will; it was born into a pre-existing world; it is connected with the universe, and forms, with this, a part of one and the same sensuous world.

Here, again, the law of causality demands that there shall be no hiatus, no break between the first phenomenon which manifests the existence of the first man, and all other anterior phenomena. If we consider, moreover, that the sensuous world is not a thing in itself, an absolute reality, but is a pure phenomenon — that is to say, a mere representation of our sensitive faculties, consequently a product or prolongation of our being — and that this is just as true of the universe of the past as of that of the present, it follows plainly that the universe is only a part of the phenomenal man. Hence arises a new dilemma: either my individual responsibility, already lost in the responsibility of the human race, is to be lost again in the still more vague responsibility of the Author of things, which is equivalent to merging human liberty entirely in Divine Providence; or else, on the contrary, since this universe is merely the apparition of my own liberty, I am responsible for every thing, not merely for my own faults, or even for the faults of my fathers, but also for the moral and physical evil that exists in the universe. Whatever point of view we may take, all idea of responsibility disappears.

In a word, in a system in which nature forms a continuous and indissoluble series, I do not see where there is any room for human liberty. Unquestionably, if we distinguish man from nature, and if in man we distinguish the soul from the body, and finally if in the soul itself we distinguish the volitions from the appetites and the passions, we may then say that a free will exists within an enslaved world. But if

in the sensuous world we include not only nature, but also man; if in man we include not only the body, but also the soul; and if in the soul we include not only the spontaneous and involuntary appetites and passions, but even the volitions; in one word, if we include all psychological as well as all cosmological phenomena; and if all these psychological and cosmological phenomena form an indissolubly connected whole — then I do not see how distinct, individual wills can have any definite and circumscribed sphere of action within this vast homogeneous mechanism. Undoubtedly I can comprehend this world in its entirety as the act of an absolute will; but then, it is God who is free, not man — unless, indeed, we confound God with man. But, in any case, individual liberty will disappear.

Would that by this hypothesis Kant could at least elude that famous dilemma in the theory of liberty which is called indifferent liberty or determinism. But he does not escape this difficulty any more than do the others; and, in spite of all his efforts, he is tossed from one rock to another.

In fact, when he argues that liberty is simply intelligible causality; that man is an intelligible causality, in so far as he is endowed with understanding and reason; when he defines understanding and reason as "a spontaneity of conceptions," which is in his view synonymous with intelligible causality; when he uses these words, "Liberty and practical reason are one and the same;" when he identifies liberty with the *autonomy of the will*, or the legislating will — that is to say, with the idea of duty — he practically assimilates liberty with duty; and with him, as with Spinoza, liberty seems to mean exclusively the possession of reason. On the contrary, when he maintains, in other passages, that liberty is indispensable to morality; when he shows that there can be no guilt nor chastisement without liberty; when, instead of confounding liberty and duty, he deduces one from another, as in the following words: "You ought, therefore you can" — words which evidently imply that one who has failed

to do his duty might have fulfilled it, consequently that he freely chose servitude to his passions — in all these passages Kant seems to use liberty in its ordinary sense, that is, as being *free will*, the power of choice; and then liberty is no longer merely rational spontaneity, but is a contingent and untrammelled power, capable of choosing between opposite actions. Thus, like most philosophers, Kant oscillates between rational determinism and the liberty of indifference; between Wolf and Crusius.

The problem is to find a mean between those two extremes, and this is no slight task. I have already endeavored to indicate this mean. According to my view, liberty is not the actual possession of reason, but it is the faculty or capacity for acting in accordance with reason. The former is the ideal or divine liberty: the second is human liberty. It is useless to adopt metaphysical hyperbole, claiming for ourselves an absolute liberty which is unmanageable by us, while we refuse the liberty which we need. Liberty does not exist for us merely in a transcendent world of which we have no consciousness: it is in the real world that we find it necessary; and in this world it is simply the power of emancipating ourselves from the control of our inclinations, thanks to the light of reason, and by the aid of feeling.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIRTUE.

I HAVE already said that the object, or the end, of moral activity is *good*. The law which connects this activity with its object is *duty*. The quality of the moral agent, in so far as he accomplishes good and obeys the law, is *virtue*. We have studied for some time the various subjective conditions of the practice of duty: we have now to sum up all these ideas in order to obtain a definition of virtue. Three elements enter into morals — knowledge, liberty, sentiment. We must now determine, as clearly as it is possible to do in such a matter, what part belongs to each.

The first theory which presents itself is that which makes virtue consist solely in knowledge: this is the theory of Socrates and of Plato. According to these two philosophers, the knowledge of good is always followed by the practice of good. How is it possible, indeed, that one should know good, and yet not prefer it? How could any one be voluntarily wicked? In Plato's view, as in mine, good is simply the perfection of being; and perfection is the principle of happiness. Now, it is impossible to conceive that any one would voluntarily be unhappy. Hence, if any one renounces the true good, it is because he does not recognize it as being so: it is because he is ignorant that it is good, and at the same time that it is our good. Hence it follows that virtue is wisdom, and that vice is merely ignorance.

This theory is very profound, and contains a great part of the truth, if not the whole truth. The difficulty lies in giving it its proper interpretation, and reconciling it with the facts.

The first incontestable observation is, that it is quite true, that, in a great many cases, vice is simply ignorance. For instance, there is no doubt, that, among uncivilized peoples, the greater part of the vices which prevail, even the most odious ones, are due to the fact that these peoples have never learned to hold them in detestation. Thus, anthropophagy, so common a practice among many barbarous tribes, is plainly unaccompanied by any knowledge of the evil inherent in this abominable custom. Religious crimes, such as human sacrifices, are due to the same cause. The immodesty of some nations which are still in their childhood is also, in many cases, the result of ignorance. Similar proofs of this fact may be found in the dregs of all society, even in civilized states. The mass of criminals — I mean professional criminals — form a nation by themselves, which, according to the report of well-informed persons, has a very low degree of intellectual culture; and while I do not desire to identify crime and idiocy, as some physicians have attempted to do, it must be said that these miserable creatures have generally very weak minds, and very little intelligence, which partly explains their ill success in the war which they wage against society. Without descending to these regions, which are better known to the police than to philosophers, it may be said, that, even among right-minded people, there are many vices which are due to ignorance. For instance, the brutality and coarseness of men with little education are errors of which they are unconscious. If they had any feeling of delicacy and modesty, they would not so readily employ coarse and obscene manners and gestures. They are, indeed, told that these are sinful. But they learn this only from outside, and by rote: they have not yet risen to the comprehension of the idea of a certain dignity and nobility which would of itself exclude coarseness of manners. I will add, that, in every class of society, there are certain vices which by their very nature suppose and imply a certain degree of ignorance in the moral agent. For instance,

gossiping — a puerile and secondary vice, if you will, but, nevertheless, a vice — is not accompanied by consciousness. No one would wish to be regarded as a gossip; for every one knows the ridicule attached to the idea, and no one willingly exposes himself to ridicule. The same is true of vanity. A vain man is, as everybody knows, an unendurable creature, intercourse with whom is extremely disagreeable. Now, a vain man desires, above all things, the esteem of other people: if he knew how ridiculous and disagreeable his vanity makes him, he would conceal it, if only from vanity. If he does not do so, it is because it shows itself in spite of him; because he does not know that he is vain. It is the same with the coxcomb, who displeases by trying too hard to please. It is also often true of the egotist, who, from his very egotism, would hide his vice if he knew that he had it, but who, on the contrary, displays it unconsciously and unblushingly. It is true of all vices which exhibit themselves, but which, from their very nature, would find it for their own interest to conceal themselves under the mask of virtue. Without granting this much to ignorance, how can one comprehend that profound saying of the gospel, that one may see a mote in his brother's eye, yet not be able to see the beam that is in his own eye. Finally, it is largely upon this principle that the forgiveness of injuries is based. "Father, forgive them," said Jesus Christ when dying, "for they *know not* what they do." Thus the cruelty of the Jews was not really cruelty, even in the eyes of the Son of God; since they did not know that they were sacrificing their Redeemer, but believed that they were merely punishing a usurper of the divine majesty.

Thus Plato's maxim is partly true, so far as vice is concerned. We shall see that it is also true, at least in part, of virtue.

The maxim that "virtue is wisdom" may have two meanings. It may mean that there can be no virtue without moral discernment, a consciousness of good and evil, and

the intention of acting according to the right. It may also mean, that, even when there is a conscious intention of right-doing, there can be no virtue unless the consciousness is enlightened, nor if the good which is pursued is not the true good.

In the first of these two cases, the Platonic maxim expresses a truth which is unquestionably self-evident, but is commonplace. But it is more difficult to answer the question whether consciousness — that is to say, a good intention — is by itself entitled to be called virtuous, and whether the knowledge of good must not be added to the consciousness of, and the will to do, good, in order to constitute virtue. This is one of the most interesting questions in morals.

Doubtless, as we have already seen, nothing more can be required of a moral agent than that he should act according to his consciousness; for no one can be required to perform the impossible. Now, it is impossible to have any other idea of good than that which one has at a given moment; and to desire that one should act in accordance with the idea of a true good of which he is unconscious, would be to desire him to act directly against his conscience, and to do what he believed to be evil. Thus far no difficulty arises.

However, can we go so far as to separate virtue entirely from the knowledge of the true good, of good in itself? Must we, like Kant, consider only the form, and not the matter, of the act? Can any action whatever, provided it is in our consciousness the free result of our will to act in conformity with good, be called a virtuous action? Is the thing in itself absolutely indifferent, and does the will alone constitute morality and virtue? I have previously criticised this way of thinking. Undoubtedly nominal definitions are free. I may agree to give the name of virtue to any act (no matter what), provided it conforms to the conscience, even if this is erroneous; but would it not be going too far to call a highly criminal act — for example, that of Ravaillac — virtuous, on the supposition that it was in conformity with the

conscience of the moral agent? But, if I should go so far as this, if I should grant that this is a sort of virtue, I must still inquire if this is true virtue, if it is the whole of virtue, and if the virtue which is in conformity with true good is not of an order superior to the virtue of a fanatic or a madman? For instance, if the sublime virtue of a St. Vincent de Paul is not superior to the criminal virtue of a Brutus or a Charlotte Corday, or to the extravagant virtue of a mystical monk of the Middle Ages? Even on the supposition that the will to do good is the same in all these different cases, will any one be willing to admit that there is an equal virtue in the wise man and the madman — in the devotion which saves, and the fanaticism which kills? At least it would be necessary to distinguish two kinds of virtue — one of which might be called subjective, and is merely the agreement of the will with the actual state of the conscience: and the other would be objective virtue, or virtue in itself, which would be the agreement of the will with a perfected conscience; that is to say, with true good. Is it not self-evident that the former can be called virtue only in so far as it is the anticipative expression of the second, and as it is a will to raise itself to the second? For though the state of my conscience presents to me only a relative good, yet it is my will to obey the absolute good. But, if it were believed that objective virtue is not in itself of a higher order than subjective virtue, then no one would endeavor to pass from the one to the other; and, since all states of conscience would be regarded as equal, it would not be possible to obtain moral enlightenment. There would be no occasion for a man to try to become more reasonable, or better. It would be sufficient for him to preserve a good will to do his duty. But, in the Middle Ages, it was the duty of a Christian to kill as many Mussulmans as he possibly could, and the duty of the Mussulman to kill all the Christians he possibly could. This double and reciprocal duty, like the virtue of ancient cities, tended both ways toward the destruction of mankind.

Thus it seems to be demonstrated, that true, ideal virtue (ἡ ἰδέα ἀρετῆς) is virtue enlightened by wisdom, as Plato regards it; while the virtue of opinion, that which consists merely in the agreement of the will with the actual state of the conscience, is what the same philosopher calls it, merely a shadow of virtue (σκιὰ ἀρετῆς). Most certainly, as I have already shown, nothing can prove to us that we ever possess any other virtue than this: for, on the one hand, nothing can prove to us that our actual state of conscience is in conformity with that required by the absolute conscience; and, on the other, nothing can prove to us that our determining motive is really even this state of conscience, and not some hidden and unperceived interest. This is why the Stoics said that there was never a single truly wise man. Yet this virtue, such as it is, may be regarded as equivalent to absolute virtue, on condition that we bring it as nearly as we can to the other by the best light we have. It is therefore certain that a knowledge of the true good is an essential element of virtue.

From these considerations we may rightly conclude that knowledge is one of the essential elements of virtue, and that ignorance is often one of the causes of vice. But must we go so far as to say that virtue is nothing but knowledge, and that vice is nothing but ignorance? On this point Aristotle justly objected that Plato omitted one essential element of virtue — the will. Plato's theory seems to fall before that celebrated sentence in Ovid; *Video meliora* — a sentiment which St. Paul has also expressed with his characteristic energy; "For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Plato himself recognizes this moral fact in his dialogue *Of Laws;* but he endeavors to reconcile it with his theory, saying that this is the height of ignorance. But is it possible to give the name of ignorance to that state in which the soul does evil, knowing that it is evil, yet, nevertheless, willing it?

Incontestably, in a great many cases men do evil con-

sciously and with a distinct knowledge; and it is in this that the sin, the fault, the crime, consists, properly speaking. An evil accompanied by ignorance may be a vice, but it is not a sin. The question is, how such a state can be possible; for it is because he did not believe it to be possible that Plato denied it, or, rather, attributed all evil to ignorance.

Why did Plato consider voluntary evil as impossible? Because in his view, good in general, the true good, is inseparable from the happiness of the individual: in other words, virtue, or justice, is identical with happiness. "What!" said Polus in the *Gorgias:* "will you deny that the great king is happy?" — "I know nothing about it," replied Socrates; "for I do not know what is the state of his soul as regards truth and justice." Thus the happiness of man is inseparably connected with his relations to truth and justice. When the soul is virtuous, it is in order, in equilibrium; justice is the health of the soul; vice is its sickness. Now, if the wicked man knew that, how could he be wicked? Could one voluntarily choose to be unhappy and sick? Would it be possible not to choose health and happiness? One is conquered by one's passions, it is said; but the passions are part of ourselves; how, then, can it be conceived that one should be conquered, constrained by one's self, to do that which hurts and injures himself?

What Plato calls impossible is, nevertheless, proved true every day by experience. Every day we do what is injurious to ourselves, even in a material way. A certain food is injurious to our health; we have found it so a hundred times; but yet it pleases us, and we allow ourselves to be tempted to enjoy it once more. The intemperate man knows that he is shortening his life; he is sure of it; daily his experience proves it, as he feels his faculties grow weaker; yet he yields to the vice which entices him, and he will yield to it until he dies. This is still more likely to be the case when the evil in question is a moral one, which does not come so near to us, and is more coldly perceived by our imagination and our senses.

The theoretical difficulty here is, to comprehend how one can prefer a lesser good to a greater; for it seems to be a self-evident maxim, that the will will always follow the greatest good. I have already spoken of this matter. It will now be necessary to refer to it again.

We must distinguish two kinds of greatest good — the greatest good as conceived, and the greatest good as felt. We may, by our intelligence, know and comprehend that a certain good is the greatest good; but this greatest good may have no charm for us. Another one, however, one which we know to be inferior to the former, has a greater attraction. Hence arises the conflict, of which we are so often conscious, between pleasure and good. Pleasure is not always the greatest good; but it is the most alluring, the most keenly felt, the most seductive. Moreover, the greatest pleasure is not always that which suits us best. Absent pleasure has not the charm of present pleasure: future pleasure has not the charm of that which is present. Some goods affect only the intelligence, not the sensibility. For instance, the duration of life is a good which a young man is as well able to comprehend as is a mature man; but this good is vague and distant in his eyes; it does not appeal to his sensibility or to his imagination.

It is still more natural that moral goods, the goods of the soul, although these are recognized by reason as the true and sole goods, should be less agreeable, less seductive to the sensibility, than the goods of the body. Man, who, like the other animals, is through a part of his nature involved in the world of matter, is enchained in tender and fatal bonds by goods of this kind. True goods, on the contrary, are at such an elevation that they appear vague and cold: besides, being of a purely spiritual nature, it is plain that they will have less influence upon our imagination and our sensibility.

Hence arises the moral conflict, which, even according to Plato, goes on in the depths of the human soul — the conflict between "the blind love of pleasure and the reflecting

love of good:" this conflict is involved in the nature of things. It is not ignorance which leads us astray: it is the charm, the seduction, of the senses.

Hence there is no self-contradiction in saying that man is conquered by himself: he is not so conquered if looked at from one single point of view. It is the moral, ideal, true, and spiritual man, who is conquered by the man of the senses, — the carnal man. The conflict is the one so well described by St. Paul as that between the old man and the new.

Hence comes an element of virtue which Plato seems to have overlooked, and which was very justly restored by Aristotle and the Stoics. This is moral force — the will. In order that the new and true man may triumph over the old man, an effort of the will is needed. For although virtue is in reality true happiness, and brings with it the sole true pleasure, this never comes until it has triumphed; and only after it has conquered can its charm and beauty be felt. It is after virtue has struggled, after it has fought, and won the victory, that it brings peace and joy: until then it appears difficult and painful. Hence, I may know where the true good is to be found, I may know at the same time that this true good is also my good, that this good is my happiness, that this happiness is the purest and most profound of pleasures; and yet, so long as I only know this without feeling it, an effort of my will is requisite if I am to choose the greatest good. As this effort is a difficult one to make, I may often yield to the attractions of the greatest present pleasure; and this is what is properly called vice, or sin. Virtue will, then, be, on the contrary, the moral force which triumphs over pleasure, and pursues the sole and true good.

Now we come to the great problem — to what I shall call the problem of problems in morals. It is the point debated between the theologians and the philosophers, between St. Augustine and Pelagius, between Luther and Erasmus, between the Molinists and the Jansenists. To make virtue possible it is not enough, as Plato thought, that one should

have a knowledge of good. But is it sufficient to add to this knowledge a will for good? Man knows and desires the good. Can he perform it? Not good will only is needed, but also strength. Undoubtedly it is correct to say that virtue consists in the moral force—in the control of the soul by itself. But is not this moral force composed of two elements — will and love? If I merely have a speculative knowledge as to where good is, will my will have the power to conquer my passions, and to emancipate me from the strong and tenacious bonds of the senses? No one has depicted the force of ruling passion more vividly than St. Augustine:

"I was [he tells us] like those who wish to awake, but who, overpowered by drowsiness, again fall asleep. Certainly no one would wish to be always asleep, or would not, if he were of sound mind, prefer waking to sleeping; yet nothing is more difficult than to resist the languor which weighs down our frames; and often, in spite of ourselves, we are enthralled by the charms of slumber, although the hour for waking has come. . . . I was held back by frivolous pleasures and empty vanities, my old companions, who, as it were, pulled at my vestment of flesh, and murmured, 'Will you, then, forsake us?' . . . While, on the one hand, I was attracted and convinced, on the other I was led away and enthralled. . . . I could give no answer but these slow and languid words; Very soon, very soon, wait a little. But this waiting had no end: this 'very soon' was prolonged indefinitely. Unhappy man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[1]

Though we may not, with St. Augustine, draw the inference that supernatural aid is necessary, we may still recognize with him the weakness of human nature in a conflict with voluptuousness, or any other passion. The religious directors of Christian consciences know by experience how difficult it is for a soul to cast off the yoke of the passions; how much help and tact, how much time, this needs; how many struggles there must be, and how often they will be made in vain! From another point of view, we know that

[1] Confessions, Book viii.

all great deeds, like all great thoughts, come from the heart. Without strong and vivid emotions, without enthusiasm, without passionate and ardent faith, who would have the strength, or the will, to rise above common life?

Hence it would be a great exaggeration of the strength of the free will if we were to imagine it to be an absolutely sovereign power, for which to will and to do are the same. Unquestionably there is truth in the common saying; "Where there's a will, there's a way." But if we analyze the word "will," as used here, we find that it means, not merely the force of the will, but the force of the entire man, head and heart. What is called *a strong will* is always more or less a will combined with passion. Hence sensibility is half of the will. Mysticism regards as a supernatural gift, as an inspiration of the divine grace, this hidden and mysterious power, which, combined with the will, gives us the energy necessary for doing right. But it is not necessary to have recourse to this hypothesis. Any great sentiment, carried to a certain height of fervor, gives man an heroic force. Decius in Rome, Thraseas under the Empire, Madame Roland and Charlotte Corday during the French Revolution, have shown us great souls under the influence of purely human passions. The truth is, that, without a certain excitement of soul, moral liberty does not seem able to rise by itself to heroism; and, as to simple virtue, we know that it is almost as difficult as heroism — if it is not even more so.

From this point of view, we may form a new definition of virtue. Virtue will not be the knowledge of good, as Plato defines it; it will be the love of good, or the love of order, as Malebranche expresses it: and we must also note, that love, as we have already seen,[1] is not merely a condition and stimulant of virtue, but that it is one of its essential elements, no less than knowledge or than moral force.

It is, therefore, beyond a doubt, that love, as well as knowledge, is an essential part of virtue. However, it cannot be

[1] See, in the same part, chap. v., *The Moral Sentiment.*

limited to these two elements; for moral force, or will, must also be added. How often does it happen that the love of good is as powerless as the knowledge of good; that a soul which knows good, and desires it, does not perform it! How many generous and tender souls, how many wise and enlightened ones, how many which unite both wisdom and generosity, are yet powerless before temptation! How many of those good intentions, with which hell is paved, are inspired by the heart and the reason, but are betrayed by the will! There must, then, always be an ultimate authority, a supreme effort, an act of personal resolution, by which the virtuous act is completed. As I have already said, this ultimate authority, which moves without being moved, is what is called liberty. What is it? Of what does it consist? What is its essence? No answer can be given. It is the most profoundly personal thing that exists within us; or, if it comes from elsewhere, it is the connecting link wherein the divine is transformed into an individual personality, in which the incomprehensible passage from the universal to the individual is made, in which grace and free will are united in an indissoluble act. Undoubtedly the will is from myself: who could will if not myself? But the force of the will does not come from me, for I did not create myself: I did not even give myself my will. Had I done so, I should have made it absolute; and I know only too well that it is not so. I should have made it all-powerful against evil, utterly submissive to good; but I know only too well that it is powerless against evil, even while hating it, and rebellious against good, while loving it.

To sum up; virtue is force, knowledge, and love, indivisibly united in one and the same action. It is the power to practise good with love and intelligence. If, in the idea of will, we include reason and inclination, as did the early philosophy, then we may say, with Kant, that virtue is the good will.

After these explanations of the nature of virtue, we will briefly review some of the opinions on the questions raised

by the ancients. For instance, no long consideration is required to show us what element of truth there is in Aristotle's statement that virtue is a habit, and, at the same time, that we must be careful not to misinterpret this definition. Aristotle is perfectly right in saying that a single virtuous act does not constitute virtue, any more than one swallow makes the summer. Thus it is by the repetition of virtuous acts that one becomes virtuous, just as one becomes a smith by repeated forging. This consideration is a sufficient answer to the tendency to make virtue consist in a single striking and unique act, while it should be conceived as a continuous and steady will. It should not be an accident; but it should transform the entire soul, forming within it new and lasting qualities. But, on the other hand, we should not understand habit to mean a mechanical routine, in which the soul itself, by subjecting itself to an exterior rule of discipline, would lose consciousness of what it was doing. We must not forget the maxim: "The letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive." It is by the spirit that we must be virtuous, not merely by actions. Thus it is not an exterior habit which is meant, but an internal and moral habit, which is seated in the will and in the heart.

As to that other maxim of Aristotle's, that virtue consists in a happy medium, this is undoubtedly a practical rule which it is well to bear in mind, and which is very nearly satisfactory in many cases; but it is no true definition of the nature of virtue.[1]

Let us hastily consider these two questions suggested by Plato and the Stoics: first, whether virtue can be taught; and second, whether virtue is one or many — that is, whether he who has one virtue has all. As to the first question, it is clear, that, if knowledge is an essential part of virtue, it can and should be taught. Thus morals may be the object of instruction and of a science: even moral force, which is,

[1] In reference to these different questions and some others also, see my *Éléments de Morale* (Paris, 1869), chap. vii.

as we have seen, the ruling element of virtue, may be an object of instruction, either by example or by exercise. As to the second question, it may be said, that, in its pure and abstract ideal, virtue is one, and there cannot be many. He who truly loves good, will love it everywhere and always. For by the very fact that one has certain virtues, and does not have others, one seems to show that one does not love good in general, but only certain goods. Thus one who is a good patriot, but a bad father, proves thereby that he loves his country, but not virtue itself: he loves only a certain good, not all good. Thus it would be correct to say with the Stoics, that there has never been a single truly wise man among men; and with Kant, that perhaps not a single virtuous act has ever been performed in the world. But, if we were to define words thus strictly, there would be no morals at all; for, if not a single virtuous act has ever been performed in the world, there would be reason to believe that this is because such an act is impossible; in which case, why should I take the trouble to wish for what is impossible? If human virtues are only apparent virtues, equivalent to vices, why should I seek to correct my vices? Thus we see that this Platonic opinion really leads back to the paradox of the Stoics, that all faults are equal — a paradox which is practically equivalent to the negation of all morals. We know, however, that the Stoics descended, when necessary, from these paradoxes, which were true in part, though purely in a speculative sense. Thus, after saying that there was no such thing as a wise man, they admitted the possibility of *progress* toward wisdom, and thence formed a standard which fixes the position of each one relatively to this wisdom. Thus, by their hypothesis, one might continue always to approach wisdom though never attaining it. Translate *wisdom* into *perfection*, and all is clear. Virtue being, according to Plato and Zeno, the imitation of God, it is evident, that, in its pure idea, virtue is impossible; for no one can be absolutely like God. But we may

approach this likeness, and this is the only possible ideal of human virtue. Thus we can comprehend how there may be many virtues: one approaches perfection in a certain order of acts, another in other orders. These divisions are arbitrary, and correspond either to the faculties or to the objects: hence arises the division of virtues. But, it will be said, how can one love good, and yet not love it everywhere and always? Does not partial virtue prove that one does not love good itself, but only one or another good? That is true; but it is also true that the love of a special good leads gradually to the love of good in general; he who has one virtue, tends to have all. True virtue, then, is that which does not give itself credits; which does not permit itself some vices to repay itself for having certain virtues. It may sometimes falter, but never by making a choice between two duties, voluntarily sacrificing that which it finds disagreeable, and contenting itself with those which please it. In this sense we may say, with Plato, that he who has one virtue has all. But they are of unequal difficulty for us, by reason of the unequal distribution of inclinations and temptations.

This would be the proper place in which to say something as to the division of virtues. But this question belongs especially to practical morals. I will merely remark, that, to my mind, any classification of virtues would always seem artificial, and that it would always vary according to the stand-point from which they might be regarded.

CHAPTER IX.

MORAL PROGRESS.

SINCE liberty, as well as moral consciousness, is an essential condition of morality, a very difficult question, which has as yet received little attention, presents itself to us. Is there, can there be, progress in morality? Moral progress, such as I have already defined, will readily be admitted: it will be granted that ideas grow clearer, that manners become ameliorated, that institutions are perfected, that laws become better and more equitable. In a word, the progress of civilization will be admitted. But it will be inquired, whether there is such a thing as progress in morality, in the strict sense of this word; whether there is, or can be, progress in virtue. We are happier and more refined than our fathers: are we more virtuous than they? It will be justly observed, that virtue consists essentially in the moral force by which one triumphs over his passions, in obedience to what conscience declares to be right. Now, can it be said that this moral force grows and is developed together with civilization? Has there not been at every age an equal amount of virtue? Or, if the amount of virtue varies, does it necessarily conform to a law of progress? Virtue is eminently individual; it consists entirely in the free effort of the will; now, this effort may have been the same in every age. Unquestionably, some centuries were more enlightened than others: but virtue does not consist in the greater or less amount of enlightenment; it consists in strict obedience to the degree of light, or to the conscience, which one possesses. A savage who obeys his conscience,

however ignorant that may be, may be as virtuous as a Socrates or an Aristides. Some may even go so far as to affirm that social progress weakens individual morality instead of strengthening it; since society, in proportion as it becomes better regulated, releases individuals from the performance of a great many virtuous acts. Thus, well-organized public charity, or improved social economy, releases men from the performance of many generous acts which formerly would have been obligatory. These are the specious arguments by which a distinguished philosopher has endeavored to prove that there can be no progress in virtue.[1]

This thesis contains much that is true; but truth should not be exaggerated, under penalty of reaching inadmissible conclusions. The author makes virtue consist exclusively in an act of free will, which act is always essentially the same, and is not in itself susceptible of progress. But to do this is to take a purely abstract point of view, which is not that of reality. Morality consists, not merely in an act of the free will, but in a compound relation of knowledge and of will. If the free will is the source of morality, moral consciousness, or the discernment of good and evil, is its condition. Every one admits, that, in order to be entitled to be regarded as a moral agent, one should be conscious of one's actions, and should discern their moral value. A child does not become a moral agent until he reaches the age at which reason is developed, and he is one precisely in proportion to that reason. We do not say of a child that he is virtuous, but that he is innocent. In proportion as he becomes enlightened, as he learns to understand vices, to discuss the dangers of the passions, the horrible consequences of yielding to them, and the dignity of life, he becomes more capable of virtue. Thus it cannot be denied, that virtue is susceptible of progress in the individual. Why should it not be the same in humanity? Savage and primitive races obey their

[1] See the *Mémoire* by M. Fr. Bouillier, read before the Academy of Moral Science, *Sur la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes en Morale.*

instincts only, like children. Sometimes these instincts are barbarous, sometimes generous; but, whatever they may be, they rule with an imperious and absolute sway. This is not because such persons are destitute of free will; but they exercise this in a very narrow sphere, as children do. It certainly cannot be denied that they have a sort of morality, for otherwise they would not be men. But this morality is plainly inferior to a more enlightened state of conscience, else we should be forced to say that man does not rise in the moral scale when he passes from the innocence of childhood to the virtue of maturity. It is man's true destiny to attain the perfect development of his conscience; it is only at a mature age that he can be fully conscious of all his rights and all his duties; it is then that he becomes fully a moral person, and that he attains complete personality. As Aristotle has so well said, no one would wish to remain a child all his life. At a mature age, in proportion as the discernment of good and evil becomes clearer and more perfect (if it is not corrupted), responsibility increases with temptations and difficulties. Affairs become more numerous, relations more complicated, duties more strict: hence there is a greater need of moral force, and of attention to one's self. The same thing is true of humanity. The development of intelligence and of civilization, far from decreasing and annulling individual responsibility, gives it a much wider field than belonged to it among primitive peoples; and, in order that a state of society in a certain degree of civilization may be permanent, a much greater amount of moral force is necessary than in the rudimentary stage. In cultivated society, how many men are continually restrained by moral consciousness, or are at least engrossed by it! Let each of us consult his own recollections, and, without any exaggeration of his moral value, he will see, that, on a thousand occasions, he is engaged in consulting his conscience. Even when he yields to temptation, the very consideration of the problem shows in itself a higher stage of morals. Is all this true of

primitive peoples, of savages? Is it not clear, that most of the time they are the mere playthings of their instincts, and that they are, to a great extent, ignorant of the scruples and the moral troubles of cultivated consciences?

I compare here only the savage and the civilized state, because it is only by considering these two extremes that we can get a clear view of moral progress; while, as between two nations or two centuries of comparatively equal civilization, we should have no exact standard by which to determine whether there was, or was not, any moral progress. Thus, for instance, it is not easy for us to decide whether morality makes any progress from one century to the next; and, if we treat the question historically, there will always be an opportunity for controversy, and for decisions which are contradictory in one way or another. But, if we draw inferences from the preceding principles, we can maintain with probability, that every thing which tends to enlighten the consciences of men, or to increase the number of those who are enlightened, tends to augment human morality in general. But there is, in reality, one element which should not be overlooked: this is, that intelligence, which is a principle of moral growth, may also be a principle of corruption; for men are as frequently preserved from vice by ignorance and habit, as by reason. Thus it is generally observed, that, while optimists see only the good side of the development of intelligence, pessimists show what are its evils. This undoubtedly makes the question a very complex one; and it is therefore not easy to estimate the exact sum of the morality and virtue which any society possesses. It is none the less true that there may be a moral progress, and that the principal element of this progress is the development of moral ideas.

What I have already observed of primitive peoples in comparison with those that are civilized, may also be said, in one and the same society, of the less enlightened classes, in comparison with those which are more intelligent. Here,

too, the state of ignorance and misery is not far removed from that of the savage: here, too, it is by developing the moral consciousness that we can develop morality. Here, too, it must be admitted that the development of intelligence gives rise to new virtues and to new vices; and it may be asked, whether the evil does not counterbalance the good. But, after all, this problem is simply that of evil in general; for it is a question whether the power of doing evil, the result of the free will, is not a melancholy compensation for the power of doing right. If we admit, as is generally done in theodicy, that Providence, in giving us the power to choose between good and evil, has given us a condition more elevated than that of the brutes, for whom there is neither good nor evil, it seems necessary to admit, for the same reason, that man, by cultivating his mind, really attains a higher degree of morality, although the indirect result of this development of intelligence may be, in another sense, a real degeneration. The average morality of a given society may be higher, although it may have more vices; just as average humanity is superior to the brutes, although some monster of vice and cruelty may be inferior to the vilest and most cruel of animals.

Let us consider the question uuder another aspect. According to the theory which we are combating, virtue is merely a constraint, a conflict with the inclinations. Hence it follows, that society, by diminishing the necessity for this constraint, by rendering it useless by means of a good education, good habits, good laws, and healthy ideas, will just so far diminish, instead of increasing, it. Virtue would have no value, except in proportion to its difficulty: make it natural and easy, and you would destroy it. This is directly contrary to the general feeling, and, I will venture to say, to enlightened practice. It is morality as seen from a scholastic, not a truly human, point of view. Certainly innocence is not virtue; and I have already observed, that a purely instinctive virtue is merely the virtue of a child, not

that of a man. But all philosophers and all great theologians have always recognized that there is a stage of virtue at which, rising above all conflict and all constraint, by becoming easy and delightful, it grows into a sort of second nature. Undoubtedly we do not find here below the ideal of such a condition: we look to heaven for the angelic state, and for that of holiness; but, even by doing this, we admit that that state, in which there is no more conflict, and where virtue is the spontaneous result of the knowledge and love of good, is superior to the state of conflict to which we are condemned in this lower world. Now, without comparing human morality with this transcendent and supernatural state, we may say that we approach this when we have passed from the stage in which virtue is difficult, to that in which it is easy and perfectly natural, whether this state is due to our own efforts, or whether it is the result of education.

Let us consider for a moment the strange results of the contrary hypothesis. If virtue is exclusively a conflict and a constraint, this conflict is possible only on condition that there are rebellious inclinations: to be perfectly virtuous, it would, then, be indispensable that one should have some evil inclinations; for otherwise, how could there be any conflict? Moral education should, then, make it an object to favor and encourage evil inclinations, so that there might be something by which to exercise one's virtue. The father who should perceive that his son was naturally modest, ought, then, to sigh because he did not discover in him the passion of pride, for he would have no occasion to conquer it: he ought to sigh if his sons were industrious, chaste, docile, charitable; for if they never felt the passions of indolence, licentiousness, and selfishness, what virtue could there be in their cultivation of their finer natural qualities? Thus, according to this hypothesis, we ought to encourage vices, and raise obstacles to virtue.

Is education directed to this end? And can we imagine

it as struggling against good inclinations, and stimulating evil ones, so that there might afterwards be some occasion for the exertion of virtue? Assuredly, ignorance of evil is not virtue; and it may sometimes be well for youth to be brought face to face with some temptations, that it may gradually become accustomed to conquer them. I am not, however, speaking of a state of ignorance, but of that enlightened state in which we love good with the full knowledge of evil, without feeling any temptation, and therefore without any conflict. I say that this is not an inferior stage of morality, but that it is, on the contrary, the highest ideal of morality which we can form. To reach a point where one would love virtue so entirely as not to be able to choose any thing else, this is the true object for the moral ambition of humanity. Now, just in proportion as good habits become general among mankind, and, as it were, essential, one is justified in saying that humanity has made a moral gain. For instance, no one would regard temperance as a virtue in savages if it were due to their ignorance of strong drink: it may be, if you will, innocence, but it is not virtue. The same is true of the chastity of the child, so long as he is absolutely ignorant of the passions of the senses. But when among any people, at least in the enlightened classes, the sentiment of personal dignity has become so general that being drunk is almost universally considered disgraceful, and that this vice has become very rare — then, either words have no meaning, or it is correct to say that there has been an evident moral progress. Undoubtedly, thanks to education, to the progress of a certain refinement, to some unexplainable second nature, temperance has become very easy for me; I have never even had any trouble in preserving it; from my early youth, contempt for this silly passion has been developed within me; I have a horror of it, as I should have of becoming a brute. Now, this is precisely the end which morals should have in view. To desire positively that good should be difficult, is to desire the eternal duration

of evil; I can have no merit in being temperate unless I am tempted to be otherwise; and thus, according to this singular theory, vice would be the necessary condition of virtue. It is not merely the yielding to temptation which constitutes the vice; it is the temptation itself; and it is this temptation which we seek to eradicate from our children as early as possible. Who could desire that his son should be tempted to theft, even if he did not steal? What would we think of a man who should boast that he had been tempted to kill his mother, and had resisted the temptation? One might admire his virtue, but one would hold him in horror, all the same; and no one would desire such virtue as this for himself or for any of his family.

It is, then, impossible not to regard as moral progress, not merely a resistance to vices, but even the suppression of them. For instance, the habits of intemperance which formerly prevailed in the upper classes, and which have now become very rare among them, exist to-day in the working-classes to a most unhappy extent. Suppose, that by instruction, by reason, and by example, the same sentiment of dignity which is now felt by the higher classes should be diffused among the lower, so that, in the coming generations, drunkenness should be the exception, and temperance should become the rule, how, without violating all the laws of language and of good sense, could one refuse to recognize this change as a moral progress? Yet the vice could not be eradicated without destroying the temptation to the vice, and therefore putting an end to the effort which combats it. Perhaps the existence of this unhappy passion to-day, results in producing in some individuals miracles of virtue. But these miracles are purchased by a contagious vice which infects innumerable offenders. Again I ask, must we preserve, and even encourage, the vice, in order to call out some virtue? Good sense revolts at such a conclusion; and every man of feeling, who loves his fellow-creatures, seems to think that it is impossible to pay too high a price for the

suppression of a vice in humanity. At the risk of not possessing the moral merit for which Alcibiades praises Socrates in Plato's *Banquet*, modern sages may well congratulate themselves that they do not experience the strange temptations with which the sages of Greece were forced to struggle.

It is apparently a paradox, yet it is true, that the moral value of an act is not always in exact proportion to the merit which belongs to it; and duty often requires that we should sacrifice some virtue. I will give a convincing example of this. According to the old ideas of charity, the greatest benefit that one could bestow on a fellow-creature was a gift, or an alms. According to more enlightened views, one should bestow alms only as a last resort: work, loans, every thing which tends to excite personal responsibility, should be preferred whenever it is possible. Yet there is more virtue in giving than in lending — in giving alms than in providing work. Suppose that a man desires to insure the happiness of a hundred families. He knows, that, by giving them half of his property, he can support them for a year; but he also knows, that, by establishing a manufactory with the same capital, he will provide for their support during an indefinite period. By the first means he makes only paupers: by the second he makes industrious men. What will morality require in such a case? Evidently, that he shall prefer the second course to the first. Yet in the second case he may double his fortune, while in the first he would sacrifice it.

Thus an act may be better in itself, even morally, without requiring so great an amount of virtue — that is, of self-sacrifice — as another act which is morally of less value. It may even happen, as in the case mentioned, that the act which serves our own interest is actually better than the disinterested act. Hence we see that we cannot always estimate the moral value of any given society by the individual sacrifice of inclinations which each one is obliged to make. The moral value of acts is not always in proportion to the diffi-

culties overcome. Hence the moral plane of one given society may be higher than that of another, although there are in it less severe conflicts with self, and fewer disinterested sacrifices.

Moralists have generally concerned themselves only with those cases in which duty clashes with inclination, as it frequently does; but, with an undue fear of falling into Epicureanism, they have not spoken with proper freedom of the no less frequent cases in which duty accords with the inclinations. By teaching us that there is no morality nor virtue save in conflict with ourselves, they have succeeded in making us remorseful because we do not find it necessary thus to struggle. Yet it is not our fault if our inclinations or our circumstances are in exact accordance with the commands of virtue. For instance, it is a plain duty that we should zealously fulfil our proper duties in society, even though these are repellent and painful to us. Very well; but if these duties should, on the contrary, please us, and make us happy, ought we to reject them, and to assume others, more painful and disagreeable, which we should perform badly? I have chosen the occupation of teaching; I love the work; if I were to begin over again, I would choose the same. Hence comes remorse. What merit is there in performing zealously duties which I love? What virtue is there in doing that which makes me happy? Yet, ought I to reject these duties because they are agreeable to me, and choose others that are repellent or difficult, under which I should break down? Ought I to become a doctor, at the risk of killing all my patients, solely for the sake of performing penance, and giving myself the proud satisfaction of saying that I am acting for the sake of virtue, and not for pleasure? In the tragedy of *Polyeuctus*, Pauline tells us that she gives to her husband from the sense of *duty*, what Severus received from *inclination*. It may be: the circumstances explain the case. But should one, then, from principle, marry in opposition to one's inclinations, solely to have

the honor of doing one's duty? If one loves her husband from a sense of duty, is not that a little like loving him for the love of God — that is to say, very little indeed? And who would wish to receive this affection from a sense of duty, instead of an affection from the heart, and from inclination?

For the same reason, happiness, an object so universally desired, comes to be the occasion of remorse and scruples. I have received from my parents a fine fortune: is it my fault that I was born rich? I have received from nature a good constitution: is it my fault if I am well? I have a faithful and charming wife: is it my fault if I am happy in my home? My business is prosperous, my friends respect me, society honors me: is it my fault if I succeed in every thing that I undertake? Was not Bentham right in regarding as moral asceticism a theory which would lead one to lament his happiness, just as people generally lament the opposite? And would not Providence, accustomed to hear very different complaints, have a right to say, as Jupiter did in the fable, that man does not know what he wants, and that he knows neither how to be happy nor how to be unhappy? The truth must be told: this morality which sees virtue only in an eternal conflict with one's self, is a morality of the college and the cloister, "a phantom to frighten people with."

Let us look around us in actual life. We see that the most virtuous men do not refuse to be happy when they can be so without injuring any one: they congratulate themselves, and we congratulate them, when they succeed in any thing. It would be necessary to do just the opposite if it were true, that, in gaining happiness, one necessarily lost virtue proportionately.

Doubtless, morality teaches us that we must make our inclinations bend to duty whenever they conflict with it, but it does not forbid us to bring our inclinations into harmony with virtue. What is education, if not this very

discipline? Have not all great moralists, all those who have best understood the human heart, taught us to avoid temptation, to shun bad company and evil examples, to read good books, to attach ourselves to worthy friends, to train ourselves to noble passions, or even to indulge in innocent recreations? In a word, as Bossuet says, they have taught us "never to combat passion directly, but to attack it indirectly." Now, what is meant by all this advice, if not that man should seek for auxiliary aids to good in his own heart; that he ought not to regard morality as being an uncertain and dangerous combat, but as consisting in good habits, early acquired, and thoroughly strengthened before the hour of conflict? In other words, man should bring his inclinations into harmony with his duties. Now, what is done by a society which is improving? Precisely this thing: it gradually accustoms all its members to find their happiness in the practice of good; it gives the majority a taste for virtue; it makes them disgusted with crimes and vices, and leads them to love morality to such a degree that it becomes natural to them. Any other definition of moral progress is a purely scholastic one, which can have no application to the life of the real world. For instance, men nowadays have a great horror of bloodshed, and respect for human life has passed into a habit; while, among the Romans and in the Middle Ages, the smallest inducement would lead to murder, and men were killed for pleasure and as a pastime. This respect for human life, which in us has no moral merit, since we draw it in with our mother's milk, so to speak, is, nevertheless, a moral acquisition; a society which has this sentiment is superior to one in which it does not exist; and each one of us, so far as he shares in the common feeling, is better than his fathers. The same is true of the sentiment of patriotism, which is stronger and more refined to-day than formerly. In the seventeenth century a prince of the blood royal could go over to the enemy without incurring dishonor: to-day, the bare suspicion of such defection would

leave a stain. The progress of patriotism is evidently moral progress. Among the Romans, the love of country was a virtue which was the birthright of every citizen, and was imbibed with his mother's milk! Was it any the less a virtue?

Hence, to estimate the moral progress of an individual or of society, we should consider, not merely the struggle with evil, but also the good which has been acquired. Virtue, by which I mean the moral conflict, is only a means, not an end. The end is, to become better; that is to say, to acquire qualities which render human nature beautiful and lovely. When these qualities are acquired, and have become natural, does this make them cease to be good and estimable? When women are naturally chaste, should they not be respected, although they have never felt any temptation to sin, or, as La Rochefoucauld cynically observed, "because they are not weary of their occupation"? Are men who are naturally just, less worthy of admiration because they have never desired to appropriate the property of another? And, to pass from the creature to the Creator, is God any less good because he is essentially good itself; that is to say, because he possesses from all eternity, and in perfection, that which we can acquire only laboriously and by degrees?

For the benefit of those who believe that the doctrine of moral progress imperils human responsibility, and tends to reduce virtue to a mere acquired habit, I will simply remark, that, while civilization suppresses certain temptations, it unfortunately creates new ones; in perfecting human nature it calls out fresh scruples, and presents new problems; in multiplying relations and affairs, it suggests new occasions for evil, and calls for new conflicts in behalf of the right; and that thus that which is acquired may possibly serve to enlarge the field of that which remains to be acquired. Thus a large part of the responsibility and honor will always be left to the free will, whatever may be the progress of institutions, of intelligence, and of manners. It is none the less true, that the perfecting of human nature is a moral progress, and that this is even the end and final aim of all progress.

CHAPTER X.

SIN.

IF virtue is moral strength, then vice should be moral weakness: it is the predominance of passion, or of the sensitive appetites, over reason, and over the idea of good and of duty. But just as virtue is such, only in so far as it is voluntary, so vice is vice, or sin, only in so far as it is also voluntary. If wisdom, or moral perfection, is a state of liberty, and if vice, or perversity, is a state of slavery, it may be said that virtue consists in being *voluntarily free*, and vice in being *voluntarily a slave*.

All the difficulties are clustered about this point; that is, the liberty of sin. We must venture to face them.

The strongest argument in favor of free will is the sense we have of our responsibility for our own faults, and of the power which we possess to commit, or to refrain from, them. In whatever way liberty may be defined, it is always true, that, among our actions, there are some which we impute to ourselves as being within our own control: others, on the contrary, we no more impute to ourselves than we do the actions of other men. This distinction is irrefragable and ineffaceable, however metaphysicians may dispute. Now, I give the name of liberty to this power, whose essence is unknown to me, and which consists in performing actions which I impute to myself, and for which I regard myself as responsible.

But, if I feel that I am free and responsible in committing my own faults, then I have a right to attribute to other men, by analogy, the same liberty and responsibility; and I have the better right, since they themselves, on a thousand occa-

sions, testify by their words and their actions that they impute their acts to themselves in the same way that I impute mine to myself. Hence comes the doctrine of the liberty of sin, without which it might be said that morality cannot exist.

Yet while it is true, that, from this point of view, the doctrine of free will in sin is clear, it must be admitted, that, under other aspects, the question presents serious difficulties and grave problems.

While we consider merely common every-day actions, inspired by passions which are common to all men, we have in our own hearts a criterion and measure by which to judge, more or less exactly, what passes in other men's minds; but when we leave this field, and have to deal with unbridled passions, which give rise to great crimes, we no longer have the same standard, and we can judge only by incomplete analogies; consequently, we do so in a partial and uncertain way.

It seems, indeed, as if, to decide exactly the degree of responsibility belonging to any crime, and to be justified in applying to the criminal the same standard as to ourselves, we ought to feel within ourselves the same passions that exist in him, the same sentiments that he has received, both from nature and from education; while there should be in him the same preservative sentiments, and the same aversions, that nature or education has implanted within us. Now, this is evidently not the case.

Indeed, the very fact of crime proves that there are in the criminal specially perverse instincts which are not found in the majority of men. To make the commission of the crime possible, there must have been, in its author, certain unbridled and fierce passions, which rendered him capable of it. Now, it is sufficient to look within ourselves to see that such passions are utter strangers to our souls. For instance, if we read that a father and mother have subjected their daughter to all imaginable tortures, even going so far as to

wound her, and kill her by burning her at a slow fire; that a miserable assassin, who, up to the age of twenty years, never did any injury to any one, and was guilty of no crime nor delinquency, kills eight people with the most astonishing coolness; that he massacres and tramples upon a woman and children, and throws them into a ditch which he had prepared beforehand; that another assassin, nineteen years old, glories in his crime as if it were the noblest thing in the world, and, when dying, delivers the most emphatic and absurd discourse, though in the full possession of his reason; if we reflect upon the many monstrous and infamous crimes which have ensanguined and dishonored the earth — I repeat, we shall vainly seek in our own hearts for any passions, any sentiments, which could give us the key to these cadaverous souls, as Rousseau calls them: we have nothing in common with them. They are *monsters*, as the popular instinct has well expressed it; but, if they are monsters, how can we judge them by a standard derived from the consideration of normal human nature?

To be strictly entitled (I am here taking a purely theoretical stand-point; and I demand, in the name of a social interest, that I should be given full liberty of examination, even in so odious a matter) — to be strictly entitled, I say, to judge the criminal by the same standard which I apply to myself, I ought to be able to say that I have felt the same temptations and the same passions, and that I have conquered them by means of my free will. If such temptations are absolutely unknown to me, so entirely that if it could be, let us say, my duty at a given moment to perform such a crime — for instance, to kill a defenceless person — I should need as much courage to decide to do it as I should to accomplish the most heroic action: if an aversion to the shedding of blood is in me — as in the majority of men — an invincible repugnance, what right have I to condemn with horror a human being in whom this repugnance certainly did not exist, at least to the same extent; since he has killed some

one, not only without trembling, but sometimes even with the most abominable coolness? He may have been free to resist this impulse; I do not deny it: indeed, to tell the truth, I do not know; for I never saw into his conscience. But even if he had a free will, as I believe, it is, nevertheless, true that this free will had to resist impulses of which we find no trace within ourselves; and this forbids us to apply to both the same standard.

It is plain why I insist upon this principle of a common standard. Indeed, the same principle of responsibility cannot be applied, except to beings of the same species. I could not judge a tiger (if he were endowed with a free will) by the same principle as a man. Now, if there are human tigers, though they may have other attributes in common with me, yet if they are tigers, and I am not, this is enough to make their nature foreign to me, and to take from me every standard by which to judge.

Undoubtedly we may attempt to explain criminal actions, and to solve the problem of a common standard, by saying that criminals do not in any respect differ essentially from other men; that every man has within him the same germs of criminal instincts; that, moreover, men never attain to the most atrocious wickedness suddenly, but only by degrees. "Great crimes are always preceded by lesser ones." A man begins by yielding to those passions which are most universal; then from one passion he passes to another, from one weakness to another; from an immoral action he passes to an offence, from an offence to a crime. At first the crime is committed with some feeling of repugnance, with terror, with remorse: then he becomes inured to it, and ends by killing for the sake of killing. When he has reached the last step of this ladder, he is undoubtedly different from the rest of mankind; he has become a monster: but at first he was a man like other men; that is, a weak and sinful creature, susceptible of good and bad instincts. He stifled the good ones, and yielded to the bad ones, but did so voluntarily, just

as we ourselves often yield to evil while knowing good. Unquestionably, circumstances, surroundings, and education, count for much; and there are extenuating circumstances which we should take into account. Yet it is true, that, at every step in the descent, the individual was always free to stop, or even to return. He appears to be of a different species from ourselves, merely because we see the point at which he has arrived, not that from which he set out.

This explanation is undoubtedly one of the best that can be given, and it is sufficient in many cases. Unfortunately it is not absolutely true: it takes no account of a great number of crimes which were not prefaced by others. It does not explain why some children, or some young people, exhibit from early childhood the most perverse instincts, as the briefs of the public prosecutor in criminal suits daily prove to be the case. There are beings who are born cruel, licentious, treacherous, thieves — savage beings, on whom education, example, and intimidation fail to make any impression. I will not say with physicians who make a specialty of treating lunatics, that these are all diseased persons: I say only that they are beings whose nature differs from mine, and I repeat that they cannot be judged by the same standard.

Here is a second explanation, which comes much nearer the truth, although it still leaves many points in obscurity. Undoubtedly, it may be said, all men do not have the same passions, instincts, and temptations, but all have some passions and temptations. One has a passion for gambling, another for money, or licentiousness, or ambition. Every one can find in himself too much passion and weakness to allow him to pride himself on his virtue. If this is true, there is a common standard for all men, and each one is under the same obligation, which is, that he should resist the passions that he feels. Each has, also, the same responsibility when he yields. Certainly, I may say to the criminal, I do not have the very same passions that you feel: but I have

passions, and it is as hard for me to conquer them as for you to conquer yours; since I feel myself culpable when I yield to them, I have a right to call you culpable when you yield to your special vices.

I admit the justice of this view; but, if we accept it, we must accept its consequences also. If responsibility consists solely in the resistance of the will to the passions and to temptations (and it cannot be placed elsewhere), then the nature of the temptations is of little importance; for these temptations, so far as they are natural to me, do not depend upon me: every thing, then, depends upon the force of the will. Hence it is not the *material* of the action which constitutes culpability, but the *formal* part; that is, the relation of the will, on the one hand to law, on the other to the temptation. But, then, why should we execrate a homicide more than an idle person? One has a passion for revenge, the other for indolence and *far niente*. He who commits a homicide may have resisted his passion as strongly as he who abandons himself luxuriously to indolence — perhaps he has even resisted more earnestly. I should not wish to say, with the Stoics, that all faults are equally bad; for I consider that the duty of respecting the life of my fellow-creatures is a more essential duty than that of labor: consequently homicide is, in itself, abstractly considered, a greater sin than indolence. But, from the point of view of the moral agent, culpability is not to be measured solely by the force of the obligation — though that is also an element — but by the degree of discernment and of moral resistance. Now, once again, he who commits the action which is in itself the more wicked, may be less guilty than he who commits a much less vicious action, if he has struggled harder, or if he has had less light.

Hence it follows, that the execration we feel for the crime is not always exactly proportionate to the moral responsibility of the agent. This execration, indeed, is directed rather to the *material* nature of the crime, than to the moral

estimate of the agent, which is purely subjective, and for which, I repeat, we can have no standard of measurement. This is so true, that it is not merely the action itself and the fact of having yielded to temptation which inspires in us an invincible repugnance, but it is the temptation itself which does so. For instance, if one of our fellow-creatures were to tell us that he had felt temptations to homicide, and had resisted them, though we should approve of his resistance, we should still feel an unconquerable aversion toward him, and it would be impossible for us to continue in friendly relations with him.

Incontestably, then, there is in crime an odious element which is purely material, and which should not be confounded with the essentially moral element, which is purely subjective, and which must be measured by the part which the free will takes in the action.

Thus the doctrine of free will does not give a sufficient reason why some men are criminal, and others are not. In certain men there is a natural perversity which we should undoubtedly believe that they are able to resist to a certain extent, but which is not due to their free will, and which they did not voluntarily produce. They submit to it rather than choose it; and while we must admit that it is their duty to conquer these fatal passions, and that they, as well as we, appear to have the means by which to gain the victory, yet it is true that nature has placed them in moral conditions which are more dangerous and terrible than those surrounding us, whom she has endowed with gentler social instincts. In one sense it would, perhaps, be permissible to say that they are unhappy rather than guilty, more deserving of pity than of horror.

This sort of innate perversity which is found in certain men, and which displays itself in sad and bloody characters, has often been cited in proof of the celebrated doctrine of original sin. It is said, that all men are born more or less egotistical and wicked; but some seem to have the excep-

tional privilege of precocious vice and predestined wickedness. But it is plain, that, even if we should admit the principle of original sin, this would not account for the fact under our consideration; for original sin is common to all men, and affects all equally. We all have sinned in Adam, and sinned in the same way, and to the same extent. Hence this doctrine will not explain the strange fact which we are considering; that is, the inequality of natural perversity in men. The doctrine that all men, as jointly and severally responsible in Adam, are wicked and corrupt from their birth, is comprehensible, although exaggerated. But why should this perversity be limited in some to a common, and more or less innocent, egotism, which is even tempered by gracious qualities and generous instincts? Why should this native perversity amount in others to ferocity, so great that they even forget all human sentiments? The dogma of original sin cannot explain this.

Kant does not admit the doctrine of original sin; but he substitutes for it another, which closely resembles it. This is what he calls *radical* sin. The fault he finds with original sin is, that it is *hereditary*. A sin, as he justly observes, is essentially personal: to make it the result of heredity is to confound it with disease. Sin can be only the consequence of liberty. Now, it is an essential characteristic of liberty that it is outside of time, and anterior to time. The very fact that the free act or sin took place in time, shows that it must have been determined by sensitive mutables; but then it would be a necessity; it would no longer be a free act. Sin is the voluntary preference of the love of self to the law of duty. If it be supposed that the love of self is what determines us, then the free act becomes an effect, when it should be a cause. Liberty, then, does not obey the love of self; but it makes the love of self a general maxim for its own guidance. It is liberty, which, by its own choice, makes the love of self the motor of our actions; but it is not the love of self which is the motor of its choice. Thus, wishing to free

liberty from all influence of mutables, and not being willing to admit that any sensitive phenomenon should precede voluntary determination, Kant was compelled to place the free act outside of time, and before any sensitive determination. Hence comes an *innate* or *radical* sin, which is due to our own choice, and is, in this sense, *acquired:* but it may, at the same time, be called *natural;* since it is anterior to every sensitive influence.

I have already refuted this strange theory, which makes us sinners before our birth, and which, while it is not open to the objection of making us responsible for the faults of our fathers, like the doctrine of original sin, is yet like it in that it makes us responsible for the inclinations and vices which are born with us. Now, no metaphysical theory, however specious it may be, can ever force us to admit that the infant who strikes his nurse does so by a choice of his will, and by an absolute act of his free will. When, in support of his theory, Kant appeals to this same popular opinion, condemning the wicked man who has, from his earliest infancy, given proofs of wickedness, which, so to speak, he drew in with his milk, he seems not to see that this is exactly the problem which needs explanation, and that it is very possible that popular opinion errs on this point, as it did when it condemned heretics and sorcerers as wicked.

While Kant's theory exaggerates human responsibility, making it begin in the cradle, Plato's theory, on the contrary, destroys all responsibility, absolutely confounding vice and ignorance. We shall find the truth between these two extreme theories, though it must be confessed that it is difficult to fix upon the proper mean with exactness.

In my opinion, it is the proper destiny of man, as I have already said, to pass from the state of nature to that of reason. Man has roots which plunge into the animal world: as an animal, he has instincts which are neither good nor bad, but which we call good when they tend to the preservation of the species, and evil when they tend to its destruc-

tion. The question whether, as a part of nature, man is good or evil — a question which so profoundly interested the philosophers of the eighteenth century — should not be answered either one way or the other. It is not true that man is merely a wolf, as Hobbes says; neither is it true, as Rousseau maintains, that "every thing is good which proceeds from the Author of nature, and every thing degenerates in our hands" — in a word, that the natural man only is good, and that the civilized man only is bad. The truth is, that the natural man, so far as we can judge from the savages, is a mixture of good and evil instincts, sometimes excited by want to the most ferocious acts, sometimes led by pity to the most generous ones.

Kant will not allow it to be said that man is at once good and evil, nor that he is neither good nor evil. These, he says, are intermediate terms, which are not philosophical. The stand-point of those who accept either of these views he calls *latitudinarianism;* and he opposes to it that of the *rigorists*, who admit no intermediate terms, and who regard man either as entirely good, or as entirely wicked. These are the views, on the one hand, of Rousseau, on the other of Hobbes; of La Rochefoucauld, or of Jansenism.

I admit, that in philosophy one should, so far as possible, have exact opinions; that one should avoid *almost, so to speak*, and *very nearly;* but one ought not to falsify facts in order to secure the merit of exactitude. Nothing can be less scientific than erroneous precision: nothing can be more truly scientific than to be contented with semi-affirmations when certainty is impossible. We should not forget those admirable words of Aristotle: "We should require of each science, only that degree of precision of which it is capable."[1]

In considering the original goodness or wickedness of man, we should carefully distinguish the physical, or natural, point of view, from that which is moral. Are we speaking of man

[1] Eth. Nic. 1. i. (ed. Bertin, 1094, b, 11-27).

as a *natural*, or as a *moral*, agent? As "coming from the hands of the Author of nature," or as deciding his own destiny by his free will? In the first sense, it seems to me clear that neither Hobbes nor Rousseau is entirely right, but that each is partly so. In the second sense, man is neither good nor bad so long as he remains in a state of nature: he becomes one or the other in proportion as he uses his liberty.

Kant, wishing to avoid intermediate terms, and being clearly unable to maintain that man is absolutely good (morally), since experience plainly contradicts this, was obliged to maintain the Jansenist thesis, that man is originally and naturally wicked. The manner in which he does this resembles in many respects that adopted by the strictest Calvinistic predestinarians. Man, he says, cannot be both good and wicked: now, he is not good, therefore he is wicked. But why can he not be both good and wicked? Because the free act by which he chooses to be either the one or the other is a single, indivisible, absolute act, standing outside of the series of phenomena. He chooses at one time, and for his whole life, his moral destiny. Now, he cannot choose both good and evil: he cannot consistently take for his motive both the principle of duty and the love of self. Taking the moral law for his guide, he cannot consent to any exception, and he ought to follow it in all his actions. Hence, if a single one of his actions is found to be contrary to the moral law (as experience shows but too many to be), that is enough to prove that the moral law is not his motor: then this must be the love of self, and therefore the man is morally bad.

The double defect in this strict theory is, that it admits of no *comparative degree* in the moral value of men, and that it leads logically to the Stoical paradox that all faults are equal. To say that a man cannot be both good and evil, is the same as saying that there are no comparative degrees of wickedness. How, indeed, could there be any comparative degree of wickedness, if good did not mingle with evil, and

temper its excesses? If none of our actions is to any extent determined by the motive principle of duty (which is the hypothesis); if all, without exception, spring from the love of self — then the fact of choosing the evil principle in preference to the good one is absolutely evil, and there is no degree of bad or worse. Undoubtedly the actions may be materially more or less bad; but morally they are all equal, so far as they emanate from one and the same principle. Now, not only does this conclusion seem directly contrary to experience, which declares that there are degrees of comparison between men, but I will also add, that, from a practical point of view, it would entirely benumb every moral initiative. If, whatever I may do, so long as I do not perform the impossible feat of being absolutely faultless, I am neither more nor less wicked than the greatest villains, why should I make the slightest effort to modify my nature? and would it not be much more convenient to yield quietly to my instincts?

Here we encounter the second difficulty, which is no less serious. It is, how to explain the possibility of moral conversion. If man must be either entirely good or entirely bad, then there can be no possible transition from one of these states to the other. An absolute act of the free will can be superseded only by another which is equally absolute. Thus, according to Kant's hypothesis, the passage from evil to good, or moral conversion, would be a mystery and a miracle. Indeed, since the free act is, according to his view, a single, absolute, indivisible act, outside of all time, how can one pass from this act — which by the hypothesis is primitively evil in every man — to another act, equally absolute and indivisible, which also embraces the whole life? Moreover, does experience show the possibility of such a conversion? Where can we find a man so thoroughly converted to good that there is no trace of evil in him, which would be necessary if he is good, according to Kant, since one cannot be both good and evil at the same time? Since

in every man, however holy, however sincerely converted to good, we see always some sin, some weakness, some evil; and since, according to Kant, there can be no commingling of good and evil — it follows that the most saintly of men is still evil: and, since there are no comparative degrees in evil, he is absolutely wicked, just like the most vicious of men. In other words, there is no difference between the saint and the sinner: there is no saint. Kant therefore does not hesitate to repeat several times that he is not sure that any virtuous act was ever performed on the earth.

I remark again upon the identity of this doctrine with that of the Stoics. In their view also, the wise man was merely an ideal, of which no example ever had been, or ever would be, given upon earth. Neither Socrates, nor Zeno, nor Cleanthes, was a wise man; for the Stoics, as for Kant, no man who is not absolutely wise, is so at all. According to each of these theories, virtue is impossible, and vice is irremediable and absolute. But as it is a contradiction of terms that a man should be obliged to fulfil a law which it is impossible to obey, and since, in fact, he feels himself under obligation to be virtuous, it must be that virtue is possible. Since, too, both fact and experience show that virtue never exists without alloy, it follows that it can coexist with sin; but then man is able to be at the same time both good and evil.

Kant saw this difficulty, and attempted to meet it. He sees, that even if one should admit, as a mystery, the possibility of conversion to good, there would still remain one objection, which is, that our acts are always imperfect, and, in some respects, defective. According to the preceding principles, it would seem to follow that man can never return to good, since he is never capable of any wisdom but such as is imperfect; that is to say, one composed of mingled good and evil, which is impossible, according to the hypothesis. But, says Kant, this imperfection of our acts is due to the fact that they occur in time, and that

they are what may be called, metaphysically, contingent. God sees the whole series of our acts: he even penetrates beyond them, into the conscience which inspires them. Hence it is not the goodness of the acts which really makes the goodness of the man, but it is the goodness of the conscience. He who has a good and pure conscience, is judged to be good by God, though he may be more or less imperfect in his actions.

This distinction is certainly quite just; and, from a practical point of view, it is certain that God would be satisfied with a good conscience and good intention, even if the actions should not be in exact harmony with this intention. But it follows from this that we should never expect from man any thing more than semi-goodness; that is to say, a mixture of good and evil. Kant attempts to save his theory by making a distinction between the conscience and the acts. It is the acts, which, in so far as they are in time, are imperfect: it is the conscience which is absolutely good in itself. This is not justified by experience. The imperfection of our acts is not merely metaphysical, but is also moral. It is not due merely to the fact that they are successive, and that they therefore express but imperfectly the good conscience: it is due to the fact that they emanate from a conscience which is not absolutely pure, but which always wavers and oscillates more or less between good and evil; although good predominates in those whom we call good. Besides, to distinguish between the conscience and the acts, and to suppose that an absolutely good conscience could coexist with defective acts, is an idea that is practically dangerous, and not far removed from the excesses of certain fanatical sects, which, fortifying themselves with the same distinction, believe that internal sanctity will atone for external sins. Kant has too pure a feeling for moral truth to be suspected of favoring such excesses; but his doctrine tends that way, although he is unconscious of it.

To correct whatever excesses there may be in the princi-

ples just explained, Kant says that it is a sufficient assurance of the purity of one's conscience if one is conscious of *making progress in good.* We cannot be conscious of an absolute virtue: it is enough that we should know that we are advancing in virtue. This theory also recalls most strongly the Stoical doctrine. The Stoics believed that although it was impossible to attain wisdom in its absolute purity, yet it might be approached; and this imperceptible and continuous movement toward an inaccessible point they called progress, προκοπή. Thus explained, the doctrine of Kant, as well as that of the Stoics, is quite admissible, and is even merely the expression of a commonplace truth — that it is impossible for man to attain perfection. So, too, if we understand by goodness, perfection; and by wickedness, imperfection: then it is self-evident that man cannot be at the same time both perfect and imperfect. But, if we mean by goodness a continual progress toward good, then evidently this progress always implies a certain admixture of evil; for, if none at all were present, there could be no more progress — the end would be attained. Now, this is exactly what is meant by those who say that man is both good and bad — a doctrine which Kant rejected as *latitudinarian*, but to which he was obliged to return, because, by his own admission, the opposite doctrine is inadmissible. It was hardly necessary to make so many fine distinctions, only to say at last the same thing with every one else.

For myself, I take, in regard to this question, a standpoint directly opposed to that of Kant; and I maintain that man, whether from a physical and natural point of view, or from a moral one, is both good and bad — never absolutely bad, and never absolutely good.

From a physical or natural point of view, man, I say again, has instincts which, morally speaking, are neither good nor bad, since they do not depend upon his choice; but, considered in relation to their effects, they will be called good if they tend toward the good of others, and of the

individual himself, and evil if they tend in the opposite direction. Thus cruelty and intemperance are evil inclinations, while pity and courage are good instincts.

Now, if we take this purely physical point of view, we may say that these good and bad instincts are distributed among men in the most unequal way, some having received instincts which are kind and lovable, others such as are harmful. Some closely resemble animals by the predominance in them of gross and ignoble inclinations: others approach more nearly the normal state of humanity by the predominance of refined and noble instincts. Whatever one may wish, and however large a share one may be disposed to assign theoretically to the free will, this primitive difference in men is very much like a sort of *predestination*. This is probably what gave rise to that terrible dogma, which has caused such excesses, confounding the domain of nature and that of liberty, or even absolutely denying all liberty. The Calvinists, the Jansenists, and the Augustinians, generally divide men into two classes — the *elect* and the *reprobate;* and we know that the class of the reprobate was infinitely larger than that of the elect. Of course, I do not accept the doctrine of theological predestination — that barbarous doctrine, which makes the distinction between the good and the wicked depend upon an absolute decree and an arbitrary act of the Creator, and which adds still further to the divine responsibility by reducing the number of the elect to almost nothing. But I do admit that there is a sort of natural predestination, in the sense that the human soul is not a blank tablet, upon which the free will may write whatever characters it chooses. Before the free will awakens, nature has already engraved upon us definite characters, by means of the physical and moral environment within which we are born, and also by means of our physical organization, and even certain innate psychological facts due to heredity; while to all these causes must be added circumstances and education. From all these conditions united, there results

for each his special and individual nature — what Kant calls his "empirical character," anterior to any free act and any responsibility. This combination of exterior, and wholly pre-ordained, circumstances, produces a certain inequality in the predisposition of men to good and evil.

From this first state, which I call the state of nature, it is each man's duty to raise himself up to that superior state which I call the state of reason; and though I am quite willing to admit that this obligation is equally binding on all men, and that the means of fulfilling it have been given to all, so that all have a *sufficing* free will, just as the Molinists believe that all have *sufficing* grace, yet it is very certain that this sufficing free will does not always suffice, as in the case of excitement from fever or delirium. Now, it is questionable whether the innate predominance of the harmful instincts, together with the absence of the natural counterbalance of moral sensibility, united with a sort of blindness of the conscience, does not create a certain predisposition to evil, in which state the free will, though existing *in potentia*, is unable to exert itself *in actu;* and it would be deciding such a question quite too flippantly to assume *à priori* that all men have the same moral capacity, which is far from being demonstrated. It is even a question whether moral responsibility is an essential and primordial, therefore universal, state for man, or whether it may not be an acquired state, itself resulting from a certain natural development of the reason, just as we see that in children discernment precedes free will. Perhaps humanity did not attain this idea of moral responsibility for a long time; and perhaps all men, even in a state of civilization, have not yet attained it; however this may be, all do not have it to the same extent.

In a word, we must distinguish in sin a *material* element, to which belong the origin, the environment, the physical constitution, and the education; and also a *formal* element — that is, the degree of voluntary co-operation or consent to

the act, united with the consciousness of violated obligation. Responsibility corresponds exclusively to this formal element. The material element is outside (unless, perhaps, so far as it is the result of a habit; that is, of an anterior act of the will). Now, of these two elements, the material and the formal, only the first is perfectly well known to us, because it consists in exterior acts. The second is unknown to us, because it is purely internal; and we have nothing by which to measure it. Undoubtedly, analogy and induction enable us to draw, from certain exterior signs, indications which are more or less plausible; but, except in the case of one's own individual conscience, all certainty in regard to human responsibility must fail us.

But, in the ordinary popular judgment of men, the material and the formal are confused; and, effects rather than principles being regarded, indignation and horror are proportioned to the atrocity of the action; while the internal motives, or the subjective state of conscience of the unhappy creature who is the object of condemnation, are utterly unknown.

This latitudinarian doctrine as to human responsibility cannot be accused of favoring moral laxity; for one always knows very well in one's own mind whether one is responsible, and no theory can make you believe that you are not so, when you feel that you really are. On the contrary, the discussion of responsibility awakens the feeling of it; and no one can take advantage in his own case of the preceding concessions. For even supposing him to be in that state of ignorance which, according to Plato, is the essential characteristic of sin (while in my view this is found only in certain states of sin) — supposing, I say, that he were in that state, in learning to discuss the degree and measure of his responsibility, he would thereby develop the sentiment which he had not previously possessed. If it is objected that this theory furnishes excuses for vice, which may always cast the blame on nature or education, I answer, that, if these excuses are

true and legitimate, I do not see why vice or crime itself should be deprived of the rightful benefit of them: and, if they are not true, my theory has nothing to do with them; for it does not require that a man should delude himself, but only that he should not judge others rashly.

Moreover, the more latitudinarianism I would desire in judging other men, the stricter I would be in relation to the judgment a man forms of himself. Men are generally indulgent to themselves, and severe to others. The contrary is right. Indeed, when other men are concerned, we do not, and we never can, know to what extent nature has paralyzed the will within them: but, as to ourselves, we never know how far will can overcome nature; and we have no right to set this limit at one point or another. As to other men, we are not responsible for their conduct; and therefore we ought to give the fullest weight to extenuating circumstances — though showing no favor to the evil in itself, which remains the same, whatever may be the extent of the subjective responsibility of the agent. But, on the contrary, when we ourselves are concerned, for the very reason that we are responsible for our own salvation, we cannot place our aim too high: consequently we cannot limit too strictly our excuses and our irresponsibility. We should, then, always act as if our free will were absolute; but, in judging other men, we should never forget that it is relative.

CHAPTER XI.

MERIT AND DEMERIT. — THE SANCTIONS OF THE MORAL LAW.

MERIT is generally defined as being that quality in virtue by which a moral agent becomes worthy of a reward: demerit should, then, be, conversely, the quality by which a moral agent renders himself, in a sense, worthy of punishment. In other words, merit and demerit would be the relation which a moral being may have either to reward or to punishment.

I think that precision of ideas requires that the idea of merit and demerit should be considered in itself, independently of reward and punishment.

I remarked, in the early part of this book, that the objects of our actions have in themselves, before there is any moral resolution, a certain value, which is proportionate to the excellence of their natures. A good heart is worth more than a good stomach: a good mind united to a good heart is worth more than goodness without intelligence. In general, the soul is preferable to the body, the heart to the senses, reason to passion. Thus there is a scale, whose degrees should measure the intensity of our esteem, and consequently should regulate our actions in conformity with this esteem.

Not only is there a certain comparative order of excellence in our faculties themselves, but, as we have seen, there is one between the different beings in nature. Man is superior to the animal, the animal to the plant, the plant itself to inanimate matter. Now, that which distinguishes man from all

other beings, is his capacity for elevating himself by means of his will above the degree of excellence which he has received individually, and approaching indefinitely the highest state which he can conceive as possible for human nature. He can also descend below his original state. In the first case he gains in value and excellence: in the second, he loses, and lowers himself; he sacrifices some of his worth.

I give the name of *merit* to the voluntary increase of our interior excellence; that of *demerit*, to the voluntary diminution of this excellence. It is a sort of moral rise and fall in stocks, to borrow a financial term. The moral worth and value of man is an effect which, like economic values, may rise and fall, doing this purely by the will. He who does right gains in value; he has merit; his action is meritorious. He who does wrong loses merit: his action is one of demerit.

Demerit is not merely the absence, or lack, of merit. The absence of merit consists in doing neither good nor evil, which is the case in indifferent actions. Demerit is not a simple negation, a defect, a lack: it is, so to speak, what is called in mathematics a negative quantity, which is not a mere nothing; for a *debt* is not merely a *not having;* a *loss* is not merely a *non-acquisition*. These are minus quantities. Demerit is, then, a minus merit, a real loss, a diminution.

"An unreasoning animal practises no virtue [says Kant]; but this omission is not a demerit, for he has violated no inner law. He has not been urged to a good action by a moral sentiment; and the zero, or omission, is only a pure negation. This is not the case with man."

Some have advocated the opinion, that merit is in inverse proportion to obligation; that, when the obligation is absolutely strict — as, for instance, that of not stealing, or not killing — the merit is equal to zero: while, if the action is entirely one of devotion, the merit is extreme; because, they say, devotion cannot be strictly obligatory. Thus there are two kinds of good actions — one obligatory, the other not so. Good is united with duty up to a certain point; beyond

that, duty ceases: but a free field is left for virtue, and consequently for merit. What is *meritorious* is thus opposed to what is obligatory.

I have already discussed this distinction between good and duty — between definite and indefinite duties.[1] I do not accept this theory. In my view, there are no purely meritorious actions which would not be obligatory, and there are no obligatory actions which would not be meritorious. Neither do I admit that merit is in inverse proportion to obligation.

Is this equivalent to saying that there are no comparative degrees of merit, and that all good actions are equally meritorious? No, certainly not; but here we accept but one standard. Merit depends upon both the difficulty and the importance of the duty. Why, for instance, is there but little merit in not appropriating the property of others? Because education has so moulded us that most people feel no temptation of that sort, and that, even if one should feel such a temptation, one would be ashamed to claim the merit of resisting it. Why is there great merit in sacrificing one's life for the happiness of others? Because we have a very strong attachment to life, and our feeling of love for mankind in general is usually very weak. To sacrifice, for the sake of duty, something we greatly love to something which we love but little, is plainly very difficult: this is why we attribute very great merit to this act.

The proof that it is the difficulty, and not the greater or less degree of obligation, which constitutes the merit of an action, is, that a strictly obligatory act may have the highest degree of merit if it is very difficult, and costs great effort. For instance, nothing is more obligatory than justice. Give to each one his due, is one of the elementary maxims of morality. But suppose that a man has, during a long life, enjoyed, with perfect serenity of conscience, a large fortune, which he believes to be his own, and of which he has made

[1] II., iii. and iv.

a most noble use: suppose that, on the threshold of old age, he learns that it is not his. Suppose, to render the action more difficult, that he alone knows this, and might consequently keep it with perfect safety if he chose to do so. Make the situation worse, and suppose that this fortune belongs to heirs who are in abject poverty, and that he who holds it will himself be reduced to utter destitution when he resigns it. Invent all sorts of circumstances which shall render the duty both more obligatory and more difficult: you will then have an action which will be quite as meritorious as the most voluntary and least obligatory one could be.

It is evident that the merit of an action depends, not only on its difficulty, but also on the importance of the duty. Thus, the merit of the difficulty overcome is no greater in morals than in poetry, if this is all. One might unquestionably impose upon himself a sort of moral gymnastics, and consequently undergo very difficult tests, though all would be practically useless; but these could be performed merely as trials and exercises, and not as duties. Moreover, it would be necessary that these trials should have some relation to the life which one would be called upon to lead. For instance, if a missionary or a traveller, who will be obliged all his life to brave every climate and every danger, should train himself in advance by bold and venturesome enterprises, these would be reasonable and meritorious. But one who, out of bravado and ostentation, with no scientific aim in view, should attempt to climb inaccessible mountains, swim across an arm of the sea, fight publicly with wild beasts, etc., would perform actions which would not be destitute of merit, since they would be courageous; but their merit would not equal that which we attribute to other actions which are less difficult, but wiser.

Two elements must, then, be united in an action, in order to give it merit — difficulty, and intrinsic value. As to demerit, this depends on the importance of the duties and the ease with which they might be accomplished. This is why

demerit is, in one sense, the reverse of merit. When an action has very little merit, the reverse of that action would have very great demerit, and conversely. Let us select some examples: a judge who administers justice impartially; a merchant who sells his goods at their true value; a debtor who pays his creditor punctually; a soldier who is exact in drill, obedient to discipline, and faithful to his duties in time of peace; a scholar who performs regularly the work assigned him — all these persons perform acts which are noble and praiseworthy, but not extraordinary. We approve, but do not admire, them. To manage one's fortune economically, not to yield too much to the pleasures of the senses, not to lie, not to wound or to strike our fellow-creatures, are all good, right, and proper actions, worthy of esteem, but not of admiration. Here is modest merit, proportionate to the efforts and the sacrifices which are required.

In proportion as acts become more difficult, they become nobler. If they are very difficult, we call them heroic and sublime, provided that they are also good — for heroism is sometimes employed in doing evil. He who, like Harley, says to an all-powerful usurper: "It is a great pity when the valet discharges the master;" he who, like the Viscount d'Orte, replies to Charles IX., after the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day: "My soldiers are not executioners;" he who, like Boissy-d'Anglas, maintains the rights of an assembly with unshaken firmness in the face of the bloody violence of a revolted people; he who, like Morus or Dubourg, prefers to die rather than to sacrifice his faith; he who, like Columbus, braves an unknown ocean, and the mutiny of a coarse and superstitious troop, in obedience to a noble conviction; he who, like Alexander, has such faith in friendship as to receive from the hands of his physician a drink which is said to be poisoned; every man who sacrifices himself for his fellow-creatures — who, in the fire, in the water, or in the depths of the sea, braves death to save life; who, to propagate truth, to keep his faith, to serve religion or sci-

ence, or humanity, does not recoil from hunger, thirst, poverty, slavery, tortures, or death — is a *hero*. This expression signifies that the soul has risen above the common plane. In all these acts, there is extraordinary merit, because the efforts which it has cost are equally extraordinary.

Bad actions have also comparative degrees. But here it is worthy of remark, that the most detestable are those which are opposed to simply good actions: on the contrary, an action which is not heroic is not, therefore, necessarily bad; and, if it is bad, it is not the most criminal of acts.

For instance, to be respectful to one's parents is a good and right action, but it is not heroic. On the contrary, to strike, insult, or kill them, are abominable actions, among the worst and most hideous which can be committed. To love one's friends, to do all one can for them, is the act of a good and well-endowed soul, but there is nothing sublime in it. On the contrary, to betray friendship, to slander those who love us, to lie in order to gain their confidence, to get possession of their secrets so as to use these against them, — all these acts are base, black, and shameful. One claims no merit for not appropriating another's property; but theft, on the contrary, is utterly contemptible. To grow weak in adversity, to recoil from death, not to brave the ice of the north pole, to remain at home when our brethren are in danger from fire or flood, are, or may be, ordinary or commonplace actions, but they are not always criminal. I will add, however, that there are cases in which heroism is obligatory; when it would be criminal not to be sublime. The captain who has brought his ship into danger, and does not remain at his post to save it; the general who is not willing to die, if need be, at the head of his army; the head of a state who, in a time of revolt, or when his country is menaced, fears death; the president of an assembly who flees before a riot; the physician who runs away from an epidemic; the magistrate who betrays justice from fear — all these commit truly guilty acts. Each condition has its proper heroism, which

in certain cases becomes obligatory. Nevertheless, it is correct to say in general, that, the easier it is to perform an action, the less should one be excused from it, and consequently the more odious is it to refuse it.

The question of merit and demerit naturally leads to that of moral sanctions.

By the sanctions of a law are generally meant all the rewards or penalties attached to the fulfilment or the violation of the law. Civil laws have usually only penalties, which, indeed, appear to be a sufficient means to insure obedience. In education, on the contrary, the commands or orders issued by the superior, require rewards as well as punishments in order to gain obedience.

It can easily be demonstrated, that a law, unaccompanied by any sanction, is inoperative. A command which is not accompanied by the power to compel obedience is no longer an order: it is counsel. If the civil law were to be suddenly deprived of all sanctions, it would necessarily lose the character of a *preceptive* law, and would be only *indicative*. The legislator would inform the citizens (who have neither the time nor the means at command for this study), that a certain law seemed to him the most wise and just way by which to regulate certain interests. If men were wise, such an indication would undoubtedly be sufficient. But men are not wise; and, as their passions clash with their interests, it is necessary that force should be called in to the aid of reason.

Thus laws are made because men are not wise; for even those who make the law, and who are held to be capable of discovering what is best *in abstracto*, are practically as much tempted to violate it as are other men. Hence it follows, that, as man is always tempted by his special or actual interest, he must be constrained by some penalty, or (accidentally) induced by some reward, to obey it. Otherwise, the law lacks efficacy: it is no longer an order; I repeat, it is a counsel.[1]

[1] In proportion as men become enlightened, many laws pass from commands to counsels. Customs take the place of penalties. In the ideal state, this would be the case with all. This is the ideal of Plato in his *Republic*.

If we accept this definition of the term sanction, can the same idea be applied to morals? To any one who examines carefully the nature of this law, such an application would seem contradictory.

The peculiar feature of the moral law is, that it demands obedience "from respect for the law;" and this is what is called duty. To obey the law from any other motive is, in a sense, to violate the law. From a moral point of view, the *material* fulfilment of the law is of no value. It must be obeyed *in the spirit*, that is to say intrinsically, because it is the law. It is the moral *intention* which constitutes morality. Now, no sanction can compel the agent to have this moral intention: on the contrary, it cannot but impair this intention. If I obey the law for the sake of the reward I hope for, or the punishment I fear, then I no longer obey it for its own sake. If, however, I ought to fulfil it solely for its own sake, it is useless, and even dangerous, to add any other motive besides this to the prescription of the law. Thus, a sanction seems to be of use only when material obedience to the law is in question; for in this case the important thing is the effect, not the motive. But when it is the motive for obedience which is most essential, then to add another, in order to render the first efficacious, is a contradiction of terms.

Thus it is but a gross conception of moral sanctions, to regard them as modelled upon the legal sanctions which we encounter in our experience of civil life. This view is the result of a system which represents the moral world as being, like the political world, subject to rules and prohibitions emanating from a sovereign and absolute power. It is the sublimated idea of force. It is said, that, without rewards and penalties, the law will be ineffectual. I reply; It will be what it will be; but if, to make it efficacious, you annihilate it, what will you have gained?

Is this equivalent to denying that the moral law has any sanctions? No, certainly not. But a truly moral sanction

must be conceived as different from a legal sanction, and not be confounded with this.

The natural belief of men in a moral sanction rests upon the idea of justice, and particularly of that kind of justice which is called distributive. The very exact formula of justice given by the ancients was this: *Suum cuique;* give to each his own. But the *suum cuique* may be understood in two senses, which Aristotle has clearly distinguished. In one sense, the *suum* is absolute; that is, it is determined in a definite way, independently of the person. For instance, life has an absolute value, no matter what man is in question — whether he is rich, poor, distinguished, a minister of state, or a workman. All, in so far as they are men, have the same right to life: it is as great a good for one as for another. The same is true of property. Whatever belongs especially to one person, belongs to him absolutely, whether he is honest or dishonest, good or bad, rich or poor, etc. The object of the justice called commutative is, to secure to each man what is his own in this first sense. From the stand-point of this kind of justice, it may be said that all men are equal. With distributive justice, the case is different. Here the *suum* is proportionate to the value of the individual: it varies with his vicissitudes and transformations. Hence the *suum* is no longer absolute, but is relative and proportional. You owe most to him who does most. To him who shows more physical strength, who is more laborious, has more intelligence, more skill — in a word, to him who renders greater services — you are indebted in proportion to what he does. The formula of this kind of justice has been very well expressed by a modern school: "Render to each according to his capacity, and to each capacity according to its works."

But two distinct elements enter into this latter formula; for capacity represents that part of each of us which belongs to nature, while works represent that which comes from ourselves — from our own efforts, our own will. The first of

these two elements does not seem to belong to us so entirely as the second. Yet we see, in the first place, that true capacity cannot be developed without a personal effort; so that it is in itself a guaranty of labor and of will. In the second place, to make a thing our own, it is not essential that it should be the product of our will. For instance, our bodies are our own, though they are not the product of our wills. They do not belong to our parents, though they are the product of their wills. Hence it follows that capacity, when employed in the service of another, is entitled to a remuneration proportioned to the use which is made of it; and I have no more right to make use of another person's physical strength, or capacity, without compensation, than I have to borrow his money, and not restore it.

But it is especially when I take into consideration personal and voluntary effort — *good will* — that it seems to me just to proportion the reward of each to his merit. If, indeed, we have in question an unfruitful good will, a labor which is not aided by capacity, I shall esteem it less highly, or rather I shall remunerate it less, than capacity which makes less effort, and does less work; because here there is question of trade, and every trade, or transaction, implies the exchange of something. Now, we cannot give in exchange an interior state of the soul, but only the products of this. If I engage workmen to build a wall for me, I can pay only those who build a wall, not one who has a good will to do so, but does not do it. I cannot build a house with the good will of other people. Hence it is that good will, or pure and simple effort, is worth nothing in the market so long as it produces no effects. But neither should I pay for capacity or strength unaccompanied by will and effort; and, when the capacities are equal, I pay in proportion to the work accomplished — that is to say, in proportion to the effort. In this case, I pay for good will, not for capacity alone. The same is true in intellectual and moral affairs. Talent, genius, aptitude for business, courage, etc. — all these natural quali-

ties, perfected and applied by the will, are, or should be (according to the ideal of distributive justice, which, it must be confessed, is not always the justice administered in this world), rewarded according to their works. Hence comes a certain social inequality, which those brutish levellers, who confound the two kinds of justice, seek to destroy.

The question which now arises is this: Is the interior act, or the free effort by which man strives to fulfil the moral law, and does actually fulfil it, whatever else may be the exterior result of this effort — is this act, I ask, deprived of the right belonging to all efforts and all exertions of activity — that of obtaining a reward proportionate to the force exerted? If the natural faculties themselves have, even without effort, a right to some reward, does not the free effort of virtue demand, as its natural and legitimate complement, a definite recompense? and although this effort, considered in itself, may not be useful to men, and therefore may not be rewarded by them (though it is by their esteem), does it follow that it can have no reward, and that distributive justice does not apply to this case?

It will not do to attempt to forestall our conclusions by replying that virtue carries its recompense within itself, in the joys of conscience: this would be granting the very thing that we require. It is not necessary at present that we should know in what the moral sanction consists, but only whether there is, and should be, any at all. I shall inquire presently whether this is internal or external, terrestrial or divine.

Now, let us for a moment imagine virtue, deprived not only of future recompense and of all advantages in the present life, such as the esteem of men; but let us imagine — to go beyond the celebrated figure of the just man crucified which Plato depicts in his *Republic* — let us imagine, I say, that virtue has not even any interior joy, and is consequently destitute of any kind of actual or future pleasure, and let us inquire whether such a conception will satisfy the

idea of justice which is implanted within us, and which should serve as the rule of our lives. Those who despise all rewards as being unnecessary to virtue, do not perceive that they speak thus, precisely because the interior delights of virtue are amply sufficient for their reward.[1] They certainly make a good choice, and take the prize which has the highest value. But they are wrong in supposing that they thus make all sanctions unnecessary; for this joy itself is the sanction, at least for them. However this may be, the idea of bare virtue, absolutely deprived of all pleasure (intrinsic or extrinsic), is an idea, which, though it does not involve a contradiction,[2] seems, nevertheless, absolutely contrary to justice, and is certainly opposed to all human instincts. But we must analyze this conception more thoroughly.

If we consider man anterior to all moral law, and independently of it, we shall find in him, as in all sensitive beings, an irresistible instinct impelling him toward a certain object, which all men call happiness. In this instinct we distinguish two elements, which Malebranche has called the *love of being*, and the *love of well-being*. We desire to preserve ourselves, and to grow physically and morally — like the plants, which yet have no feeling. We delight in exercising and developing our powers, though not knowing whether this development may not be accompanied by pain. This is the love of being. Furthermore, we seek for pleasure, and avoid pain: this is the love of well-being. In reality, these two elements are not so distinct as they appear to be; for being — that is to say, all development of activity — is accompanied by pleasure; and well-being — that is to say,

[1] Often, indeed, this is the pride of virtue, and the pleasure of despising other men, which is the grossest form of moral satisfaction.

[2] Kant justly remarks (*Crit. of Prac. Reason*), that the connection between virtue and happiness is not *analytical*, but *synthetical*. We know what he means by this. He criticises the Epicureans and the Stoics for having both confounded (though inversely) these two conceptions. Perhaps this is not altogether just, so far as the second are concerned.

pleasure — is always the result of a definite development of activity.

Now, it is certain that the moral law forbids us to seek for happiness, and even commands us to restrain the instincts which impel us toward it. It will not do to say that it forbids us to seek a false happiness in order that we may attain one that is real, for this is precisely the point in question — the very thing that I desire to prove. It is certainly true, that the moral law, taken in itself, contains no promise of happiness. It issues commands as though nothing of the sort were to be expected, and even as though it were unconscious of the existence of such a thing. Hence it is a law of sacrifice. Now, if the essential nature of the law requires that the moral agent, at the moment of fulfilling it, must not think of happiness — that he ought utterly to banish the idea; if the moral agent can, and perhaps should, go so far as to say, "Even if the law required my absolute unhappiness, yet I ought to obey it" — even, I say, if we go to this extremity, yet the impartial spectator would still be entitled to ask, if a law which carries constraint so far as to demand the annihilation of the Ego and of the individual, could be a legitimate law. Can a law that is cruel be just?

But, it is replied, since the moral law requires the utter sacrifice of the desire for happiness, is it not clear that one who fulfils it will have destroyed, and torn up by the roots, all his desire for happiness? He will have become indifferent to his own happiness, and therefore will feel no pain in sacrificing it. If he suffers, it is because he has not perfectly fulfilled the law. When he has attained moral perfection, and every exclusive element in his love of himself has been destroyed, then the contradiction of which you speak will no longer exist. Thus it is not the law which is cruel, but the individual who does not fulfil it to the uttermost is cruel to himself.

To this theory I raise the following objections: 1. Such a sacrifice is impossible for man, as he is known to us; 2. It

is illegitimate; 3. If it were possible and legitimate, it would be happiness; that is, the very thing we are in search of.

1. The absolute sacrifice of all desire for happiness — that is, of all sensibility, even moral — is a pure chimera. Such a requisition can be made only of some being unknown to us, not of man such as he actually is. The law can command me to pay no attention to my desire for happiness, but not to destroy it; for that would be impossible. It always survives, whatever one may do. Would not a law which should command us to pay no attention to this, and to trample under foot the most deeply rooted and indestructible of all our inclinations, be a cruel, and even an unreasonable, law? For how could an ideal law be in contradiction with the very nature of the being to whom it applies? The accusation of cruelty, so often brought against God and Providence, would be equally just as against the moral law. It is undoubtedly a fine thing to say, with a modern moralist: "What matter if a man is unhappy, if he is but great!" But it is fine only if we take the term "unhappy" in its common meaning: for, in reality, one who is great, and is conscious of being so, is not unhappy, since this consciousness amply compensates him for what he lacks in other ways.

2. The destruction of the desire for happiness is possible, only upon the condition of the utter destruction of sensibility. Now, this is a thing which morality cannot command, but which it even condemns. How can one become indifferent to pleasure and to pain unless one first becomes indifferent to the affections, as well as to the inclinations of the senses? One would need to annihilate all one's affections, and say, with Epictetus, "Your son is dead? You have given him back. Your wife is dead? You have given her back. Your field is taken from you? You have given it back."[1] These words are admirable if they express the firmness with which one should bear misfortune: they would be odious if they

[1] The conjunction of these three objects is a further proof of insensibility — a son, a wife, a field.

implied a real and absolute insensibility. Plato, also, says somewhere, that the wise man is sufficient to himself, and that the loss of all that is dearest to him will not be to him an intolerable misfortune; but he is careful to explain, that he does not recommend an impossible insensibility, but only a noble patience, and a certain moderation when in the sight of men. Indifference to our own pain is also indifference to the happiness of others. The formula of the moral law would then be: What does it matter to me, not only if I suffer, but even if others suffer, provided that I am not the cause of it, and that I have done every thing in my power to comfort them? This refusal of all sympathy, provided that one has fulfilled the requirements of the law, is a travesty of the law, not its true formula. Otherwise, a man who had passed his life in the effort to insure his children a livelihood, though he were unsuccessful, might say, in dying; "I leave my children in want; but what does it matter? I have accomplished my task: I have done what I could."

The statesman, who had preserved his country, but who foresaw that it would go to destruction after his death, might say: "I leave my country a prey to anarchy and slavery; but what does it matter? I have done all I could to save it." No! These two men would not have fulfilled all the law: they would still have one more moral act to perform. It would be their duty to die deploring the evils which they could not prevent.[1] They would owe it to themselves to die unhappy.

8. Even on the supposition that the destruction of all sensibility, and all desire of happiness, were legitimate and possible (either here or elsewhere), I say, that, in that case, this itself would be happiness. This is not a mere verbal quibble, as one might suppose. It is the literal truth. Happiness, and

1 It is said that Charlemagne wept, foreseeing the incursions of the Normans. Is he not morally greater thus, than if he had seen with dry eyes the future fate of his empire? *After me the deluge*, is a shameful sentiment if it is uttered by the feeble cowardice which resigns itself to fate; but, if less culpable when pronounced with indifference by virtue, it is not guiltless, even then.

even pleasure, may be defined, either positively, as being a certain state of definite sensibility, or negatively, as being the absence of their opposite. Every one knows that the great apostle of voluptuousness, Epicurus, defined pleasure as being the absence of pain (*indolentia*). Now, even supposing that there were no other positive happiness, it would still be happiness to be without suffering. What men call peace, quietude, is simply a passive happiness of this sort. Let us grant that the moral law orders us to sacrifice all our inclinations, even that for happiness (supposing that this were possible); yet, even by doing so, it would offer us a sort of ideal of happiness, saying to us, for instance; "Triumph over all your instincts, no matter what it costs you. The more completely you stifle them, the less they will resist; and if, at last, you succeed in extinguishing them entirely, it will no longer cost you any thing, and you will enjoy the victory." Thus, according to this doctrine, ideal virtue, or holiness, would be both the aim and the recompense of real virtue — that which struggles against the inclinations. Thus the moral law would bear within itself its sanction, and this sanction would be the inevitable result of its fulfilment. We might, therefore, say, with Spinoza; "Beatitude is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself."

Thus we see that virtue, separated from all hope of happiness, is an injustice if sensibility is indestructible, and a contradiction if it is not so.

It is, therefore, plain that the moral law should have its sanction, which certainly is not, like a legal sanction, a *means* by which to secure the fulfilment of the law, but is a *consequence* of the law of justice. We shall also see, that, if the moral law were destitute of such a sanction, it would thereby become inefficacious. For an unjust law which should command justice would contradict itself, and a law which contradicts itself is no law.

It would be a contradiction if man were required to be just, yet at the same time were not to receive justice. In-

deed, if there were no moral being from whom the law of justice emanates, it would be difficult to tell where man could lay the blame if the law of justice were not applied to him. The nature of things is blind and deaf: how could it be just, since it does not even know what that means? As to the moral law itself, it is only a thought: now, how can I require my thought to be just? Would not that be an absurd demand? Does not Plato say that justice cannot be just, grandeur great, etc.? Certainly: yet, if justice cannot be just, the law can be so; and an unjust law has no right by which to command justice. A law which should command me to sacrifice my happiness utterly, would order me to do to myself what it would forbid me to do to any one else. If my happiness is a matter of indifference, I do not see why the happiness of others should not also be a matter of indifference to me. Thus, again, the law would destroy itself.

It is, then, impossible not to conceive the existence of a necessary bond between virtue and happiness; and the moral law evidently has a sanction. From what has already been said, this sanction may be thus defined: *the duty of the law toward the agent;* or, *the recourse of the agent against the law.* And since one cannot conceive a law as having duties, or an agent as having recourse against a law, this very idea of justice, as Kant has shown, involves the necessity of transforming an abstract law into a living type, and of conceiving it as embodied in a sovereign legislator or sovereign judge. Thus the existence of a moral law is one of the strongest arguments for the existence of God.

What, then, are the results of the preceding principles?

We have just seen that moral sanction differs widely from legal sanction. The special object of the latter is, to insure the fulfilment and efficacy of the law: the former is, on the contrary, the natural consequence involved in the very fulfilment of the law. In civil law, the sanction is exterior to the law: in moral law, it is interior and essential to it.

It is, therefore, altogether erroneous to imagine virtue on the one hand, and sanction on the other, as being two distinct things; to believe that happiness is a combination of satisfactions and enjoyments which are added to virtue as a sort of reward. Were it so, morality would become a kind of trade, in which one would offer to God the sacrifice of one's inclinations, but with the distinct understanding that he was to render an equivalent return. Virtue would then be a putting out at interest. God would be a kind of debtor, and we should be his creditors. Those who had confidence in him would make advances without keeping an account: those who had not, would feel that they would do well to take precautions. Bold players would take a risk, attracted by the enormous stake, and made quite easy, moreover, by the small value of what they hazarded.

It is with no desire of undue disparagement that I represent by this figure the erroneous ideas which men generally have as to the immortality of the soul. Pascal himself, the great Pascal, presented the moral problem in this coarse and brutal form: Eternity to gain — there is the prize; life and its pleasures to sacrifice — there is the stake. An infinitesimal stake for an infinite prize; every thing to gain, almost nothing to lose. One might well play such a game. You toss up for God. What a religion! What piety! How much higher an idea of God was held by poor Epictetus, in spite of the contempt which Pascal thought it right continually to heap upon him!

Kant himself, notwithstanding his lofty morality, seems to me to have entertained erroneous ideas upon this subject. He imagines happiness to be something distinct from virtue. He criticises the Epicureans for having regarded the sovereign good as consisting in happiness alone, and the Stoics for considering it as being virtue alone. He believes that the sovereign good consists in the union of the two things — in the harmony of virtue and happiness. He says, that, as the mechanism of nature was not constructed with a view

to the moral agent, man cannot find here below the happiness which he deserves. He believes in the necessity of the existence of a judge who will re-establish the equilibrium; and he seems to think that this judge will have prepared somewhere else another mechanism, another natural order, which will be the recompense for actual virtue. Thus it is man's business to furnish the virtue, and God will add happiness to it as a reward.

All these ideas may unquestionably be understood in a right sense; but, if taken literally, they tend to impair the purity of the moral principle. Virtue will cease to be any thing but a means of gaining happiness. The future life will always remain a sort of greased pole, whose crowns, suspended before our eyes, lure us on, and reward us for the labor of being good.

For myself, I unhesitatingly accept the Stoical maxim: Virtue is its own reward. I do not say with Kant: "Virtue is *worthy* of happiness," but — it *is* happiness. So, too, I say with Spinoza: "Beatitude is not the recompense of virtue — it is virtue itself."

Can one imagine a being who has raised himself to the utmost excellence of which he is capable, and who needs to be rewarded for doing so — as though the enjoyment of that excellence were not already true happiness, and as if there could be any other happiness than that? Can one imagine a geometrical triangle, hypothetically endowed with consciousness and liberty, which, having succeeded in disengaging its pure essence from the conflict with material things which tend on every hand to violate its nature, could still need to receive from exterior things a reward for having freed itself from their dominion? Can one conceive that virtue, which is an absolutely interior act, could need to receive from without something which could add to its beauty and its value? No: there is no other happiness for man to dream of than his own excellence. To find again his true being, to free it from all which wounds, stains, and

oppresses it — that is happiness, that is virtue, that is eternity.

The future life should not, then, be represented as a recompense, but as a deliverance. Religion calls it by an admirable name — *salvation*. In the actual conditions of our life, the soul is subject to physical and mechanical laws which prevent it from attaining the perfect purity of which it dreams, and from enjoying its true dignity and its acquired excellence. The joys of conscience are often unable to console us for the blows of destiny. The earth is a vale of tears as well as a battle-field. Grief bends down the strongest, and woe to him who has not wept! Virtue submits to these conditions, and accepts them, even joyfully: but she has a right to deliverance; it is her reward.

The Orient had an admirable feeling for this truth, considering, as the greatest evil man could endure, the indefinite renewal of birth — that is to say, repeated returns to the same conditions of constraint and oppression, which prevent man from attaining to his true essence. The Nirvâna of the Buddhists is not, in my opinion, a doctrine of annihilation; but it is the being disengaged from all the conditions of phenomenal, and the assured enjoyment of absolute, existence.

But how can we feel assured of this future existence? What guaranty have we for it? And, if we do not admit the necessity for a future recompense, upon what argument shall we base belief in the persistence, the permanence, of our being?

This objection does not touch my theory. The argument drawn from divine justice remains perfectly intact. I only modify its form. I do not say, Virtue is entitled to a recompense; but I say, Virtue is entitled to itself. The man who, during his whole life, has striven to attain as nearly as possible to the ideal which he has conceived of dignity, truth, and purity, but who has never been able to reach it, because limited, oppressed, and opposed by external causes — that man has a right to the ideal which he has endeavored to

realize, though in vain. The reward of virtue, as I have already said, is virtue itself. Not that imperfect and struggling virtue which yields at every step, but a virtue which no longer yields, no longer totters, no longer suffers. It has a right to pass from the law of constraint to the law of love, and from a fettered, to a pure, personality. In a word, the recompense of virtue is liberty. The Catholic religion understood this admirably, when it offered holiness as the highest reward of virtue.

Just as the recompense does not seem to me to be something exterior to virtue, so immortality does not seem to be something exterior to the soul, added to it as a supererogatory gift by the intervention of an arbitrary will. We feel, we know, that we are eternal. It was in creating us, that God made us a free gift; but in creating us he made us eternal, or at least he left us free to become so. To be eternal is to participate in the absolute; and whoever thinks and loves, thereby participates in the absolute. To think and to love is not the same as to feel sensitively: it is not by the senses that man thinks, it is not by them that he loves. The object of love, the object of reason, is the intelligible and the divine. But how can a man love and think the intelligible and the divine, if he does not already contain them within himself? "The soul," says Plato, "goes to that which is eternal and unchangeable, as being itself of the same nature."

But, it is said, this immortality of the divine is merely an impersonal immortality, without consciousness, without memory. It is only the eternity of God himself. I do not so understand it.

We should distinguish the personality and the individuality, which are frequently confounded. The individuality is composed of all the exterior circumstances that distinguish one man from another — the circumstances of time, place, organization, etc. The individual has a certain body, a certain age, a certain face; he lives in a certain country, in a certain time; he performs certain functions, has had certain

adventures, has performed such and such actions. Is it the immortality of this individual which is required? Does not every one know that one of the essential elements of this being — that is, the body — is dissolved and scattered by death? And how would you recognize him, without the marks which have characterized him in life? How could you recognize the soul of Cæsar, separated from his body, deprived of his dictatorship, of his armor as general, of his wit and of his vices? Unless we have recourse to theology, and call in the dogma of the resurrection of the body, it is impossible to admit the idea of an individual immortality, in the strict sense of the word. The Ego does not perish: it is this which subsists, not an indefinite substance. But this immortal Ego is not the sensitive Ego, scattered and lost among things; it is the true Ego, collected and concentrated in itself; it is the person.

Personality strikes its roots into individuality, but it constantly tends to disengage them. The individual concentrates himself within himself: personality, on the contrary, constantly aspires to get outside of itself. The ideal of inindividuality is egotism — the whole reduced to the Ego. The ideal of personality is self-devotion, the Ego identifying itself with the whole. Personality is, in a certain sense, *the consciousness of the impersonal.* It is not in so far as I am capable of sensation — that is to say, of physical pleasure and pain — that I am a person: it is in so far as I think, I love, and I will. It is in so far as I think the true, love the good, and will both. The inviolable element in other men is not the animal sensibility, not the mechanical instinct, or the vital functions. It is plainly not their stomachs, their sensuality, or their vices. It is the spark of divinity which is within them: it is their capacity to participate, like me, in that which is neither thine nor mine; in the sun which shines for all spirits, and all souls; in truth, justice, liberty, and every thing that is impersonal. Personality, I say, is the consciousness of the impersonal. It is this consciousness

which every man has of the divine which is immortal, and not certain fragile and illusory accidents which we may vainly desire to take with us.

The mystics understood clearly that it is within the impersonal — that is, within that which is not ourselves — that the life of the spirit is perfected. But they were too ready to believe that this consummation of personality was annihilation, and consisted in the loss of the true and of consciousness. This does not take place: even in this life, experience assures us that it is not so. The scholar who has just discovered a great truth forgets himself, separates himself for a moment from his individuality. He does not know in what age he lives, in what place he dwells: he is absorbed in the truth which he has discovered. Yes; but he is conscious of it. The artist who creates a masterpiece, forgets himself in the marvellous production of his imagination. Yes; but he is conscious of it. He enjoys that which is not himself, but he knows that he enjoys it. The father forgets himself in his children, the friend in his friend, the lover in his beloved, the hero in his country, the citizen in the ideal of liberty and justice which he dreams of for all men — all forget themselves in that which is not themselves; but they are conscious of it. Thus the Ego is completed in the Non-Ego, but it is not absorbed nor lost. It is at once within and outside of itself. It is its own essence which it regains when it rises from the exterior and carnal life to the life of the spirit — the absolute life.

Speculative philosophers, accustomed to pure thought, have been too much inclined to make the future life consist in the preservation of pure thought. This was the doctrine of Aristotle and of Spinoza. But these philosophers and scholars were a little too much disposed to conceive of the divine life as modelled upon that which they loved best in terrestrial life. For a scientist, what can be more beautiful than science? But what will you do with those who are not scientists — those who have not cultivated general ideas,

but have cultivated the treasures of their simple and tender hearts? those who have loved men, and done good to them; mothers who have adored their children, and have lost them; those who have devoted themselves to some person or to some thing without having any theory, and who, with no abstract, speculative views, have simply died in behalf of truth and justice? No: it is not proved that the heart is less divine than the mind. "The heart, too, has reasons which the mind does not understand." It, too, has its general truths: it, too, is eternal.

Eternal life is not, then, the annihilation, but the consummation, of personality. But here new difficulties and new problems arise. Is it an immediate passage to the absolute state? Is it the progressive development of our being under more and more favorable conditions? Here no solution is possible, for we have no experience to guide us. The imagination is free to picture this future under whatever colors it pleases. It is not thence, but from the consciousness of its own value, that the soul will draw its real motives for virtue.

CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION.

SOME ask whether there can be any morality without religion. The question is ill expressed. It should be; Can the moral, be complete without the religious, life? Experience proves that men can be just, honest, temperate, and sincere, without possessing piety. But is not the lack of piety in itself a lack of virtue, a diminution of the moral being? Should not the moral life express and contain the entire man in all his relations to God, as well as to men and to himself? Cast into the world, not knowing why; taken out of the world, not knowing how — can he include his whole being within these two terms, birth and death, never casting his glance beyond these two shores, never fastening on some firm anchorage within this vast ocean which surrounds him on every side? Doubtless the organization of religious life may become more and more difficult in an age of inquiry and criticism like the present one;[1] but, if piety has a legitimate and permanent foundation in human nature, it will inevitably find means to satisfy itself, in one way or another, after many painful crises, such as often occur when the social environment is not adapted to the needs of the soul.

Thus the only truly philosophical inquiry is, whether religion is rooted in the very nature of man, or whether it is

[1] In regard to this question, consult my *Problèmes du XIX. Siècle*, l. v., c. iii. It is hardly necessary to say, that, in this chapter, I do not refer to any special form of religion, but merely to religion in general, in its essential and human elements.

but a passing and ephemeral state, destined to disappear when a higher degree of civilization is attained. This last opinion is held by the celebrated school which believes it has discovered the fundamental law of human development. This is that law of the three states — theological, metaphysical, and positive. According to this school, as we know, the human soul begins by divining the forces of nature or the faculties of man, and gradually transforming them into a type of spirituality and infinite personality, who governs the universe by his will, and constantly intervenes by supernatural action. The supernatural is the domain of theologians and religions. But, when the spirit of reflection awakens, it, in its turn, transforms these symbols, these myths, and anthropomorphic illusions, into metaphysical abstractions. This is the second stage, which is soon succeeded by a third, — that of positive ideas, derived from observation and experience. Mythical persons, the object of religion, and metaphysical entities, the object of philosophy, are succeeded by facts and laws, the object of science. This is the law of evolution enunciated by the positivist school, according to which the religious idea and sentiment appears, as we see, to be merely a primitive condition, a rudimentary degree of civilization.

Even should we accept the preceding law (and it is open to many objections), it would still be a question whether this is the ultimate law, and whether there may not be another superior to it. For instance, whether there may not be a law of return and retrogression, so that the stages which were once traversed in the manner indicated will be again gone over in an inverse and reciprocal direction; whether, having arrived at this imagined point called the positive state, the human spirit does not have a tendency to return to the anterior condition. Metaphysics may seem to be an advance from a childish and superstitious theology: the positive state may appear to be an advance from a conjectural and none too enlightened metaphysics, but this does not prove that the

positive state itself will give absolute satisfaction and final repose. It may chance — and in my opinion this is the true law — that, having arrived at the positive and scientific state, reflection, applying itself to the facts and laws by which it is attempted to enthrall it, will find in them a new metaphysics; and that the soul, in its turn sounding the depths of this new metaphysics, will find there the foundation of all religions. Such a law of return is in such perfect conformity with the nature of things, that the founder of the school of which I speak has himself given us an example of it. Above this first, and purely positive, philosophy, a second has been set up, which is nothing else than a metaphysics and a religion.

Indeed, it might be maintained, that, if there is such a retrogressive movement, there should also be, by a natural and foreseen oscillation, a new evolution of criticism, which would bring back the three states successively, and would be again followed by another retrogression, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Why not? This application of Vico's[1] law of *ricorsi* might be correct, without necessarily implying that humanity must always turn in a circle, and never advance. It may, as has been said, turn in a spiral, in such a way, that, at each new revolution, each phase of the preceding one will be repeated, but in a higher degree. This double movement of the approach and retrogression of humanity in relation to its natural centre, which is the centre of all things, seems to have been foreboded by some philosophical schools of antiquity, who also held that there was a double movement in the universe, one of ascent, the other of descent (ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω); and seems to me quite in conformity with the essence of human nature, which is at once circumscribed and infinite.

Moreover, we have already made an important observa-

[1] Aug. Comte's theory of the "three states" is merely a revival, under a new form, of Vico's theory of the "three ages" — the divine, or theocratic, the heroic, and the historic, ages. But Vico admits that there is an alternate return of these three ages, which is what he calls the *ricorsi* (reflux).

tion, which limits the operation of the law just suggested. This is, that every man and every nation does not pass through these three stages at the same time, nor with the same velocity; so that the three are always contemporaneous. Still further, the individual man does not always pass through them in the order indicated. The three states may even coexist. We see some scientists who are more credulous than some philosophers, and some philosophers who are more positive than some scientists. From these remarks it follows that the law in question is equivalent to saying that there are three states of thought — faith, reflective thought, and experience — and that these three states are mingled in a very complicated way in every man. This proves nothing for or against the future prospects of religion among men. From the positive point of view, there are as many reasons for affirming the perpetuity of religion as for maintaining that it will gradually disappear. Doubtless the theological or religious state is only *subjective*, as has been said. But it is far from being proved that it should therefore be suppressed, for there is no reason why such a subjective state may not be essential to humanity. Paternal love is also a subjective sentiment. Shall we say, therefore, that it ought to give place to physiological or juridical science, one of which explains the laws of generation, and the other the abstract laws of paternal authority? I repeat, then, that, if religion is proved to be a subjective fact, this is not sufficient to make it disappear from the human soul. Though religion is not science, it does not follow that it is nothing at all; for it is neither self-evident, nor possible, that science should be substituted for every thing else, and that it alone should completely fill the soul of man.

Another philosopher,[1] taking a psychological stand-point, attempted to furnish the demonstration which the positivist school failed to give, and to prove that religion is only a

[1] See M. Vacherot's fine work on *Religion* — a book which is profoundly religious in tone, although it appears to decide against all religion.

transitory state and an inferior stage of civilization. His demonstration is based upon a comparison of the species and the individual. According to him, religion belongs to a period in the history of humanity which corresponds to the state of childhood or youth in the history of the individual. In the life of the individual we see, indeed, that youth is the period of imagination and sensibility; that is to say, of the tendency to believe, and to love the mysterious and unknown. This disposition is soon followed by reflection, which destroys the beliefs of youth; and by experience, which contradicts them. The same is true of the human race. Religion is a brilliant and poetical phenomenon, which belongs to the youth of humanity: hence it should vanish gradually, as humanity approaches its maturity.

The error in this explanation is, that it assumes the very point in question; that is, that religion is a pure illusion, a dream of the imagination. If it is but this, then it will inevitably disappear, or will at least tend to disappear in time; and every enlightened mind should contribute to dissipate its illusions, as those of sorcery and judicial astrology have already been dispelled. But is it true, that, when we have taken from religion all that is imaginary, nothing will remain? Those who believe in the perpetuity of religion believe that it is something more than a mirage of the imagination, and that within its varying forms there lies enveloped an eternally living truth. Doubtless religion belongs to the domain of sentiment, rather than to that of reason. But it is questionable whether sentiment belongs only to childhood and youth, either in the individual or in the race. As to the individual, we do not see that the sentiments always disappear with age. If they are sometimes congealed by experience. this is a misfortune rather than a benefit: it is not this which makes maturity superior to youth. It may even be said, that, in noble souls, sentiment grows and deepens with the flight of time. Hence, if religion is a sentiment, I do not see why it may not exist so long as humanity endures.

Moreover, without exaggerating the influence of sentiment among men, it may be believed that it unites them more closely one with another than does reason. Friendship, love, and patriotism, go far beyond cold reason. Why should there not be a sentiment which will penetrate more deeply into the nature of things than the scientific or philosophical faculty can do?

Besides, the argument drawn from the individual does not prove any thing as applied to the race. Though some individuals pass from faith to doubt, from doubt to denial, it does not follow that the same thing takes place in all. Certain men do not have any religious sentiment, or they have lost it: that does not prove that the sentiment is a delusion. We may apply to them the words of the comic poet: "This man certainly does not love music: that is no argument against music." Many men have no feeling for the beautiful; others lack appreciation of nature; some even seem to be entirely destitute of any moral sentiment. But does any one believe, therefore, that humanity will ever lose the sentiment for beauty, and that it will renounce all morality? The same author admits that the sentiment of the ideal belongs to the essence of religion. Now, many men have no sentiment of the ideal, and claim exultantly that it can never survive the clear light of experience. Hence the same critical labor which, according to this author, will destroy the religious sentiment, ought also, even *a fortiori*, to break up and dissolve the much more fragile one, which he calls the sentiment of the ideal.[1]

[1] I will readily grant, with M. Vacherot, that the religious sentiment is simply the sentiment of the ideal; and it is precisely this which I analyze farther, resolving it into two elements, one metaphysical, the other moral—the one, the sentiment of the infinite; the other, faith in divine goodness. As to the objective reality of what the author calls the ideal, this is a metaphysical question which it is not my province to treat of here. I will only say, from a purely practical point of view, that moral action presupposes faith in the possibility of a progressive realization of the ideal in this world. Now, such a possibility is incomprehensible, except on condition that it is rooted in the nature of things. There is, then, a reason for things, which determines them

But, it may be said, nobody claims that religion will disappear utterly from humanity; for it is well known that there will always be inferior states of consciousness, and it is also admitted that religion may have a *relative* value which will always make it more or less useful to mankind. It is enough to say, that it is the tendency of humanity — and a legitimate one — to disengage itself from it gradually.

This concession is not enough for me, and I will press the question farther. What concerns each one of us is, not to know whether, as a matter of fact, religion will always exist — as if they wished to re-assure us by affirming the perpetuity of such a curb: the question is, whether religion *ought* to disappear in principle, even if it should continue to live by its acquired momentum. We know quite well, for instance, that delusions and errors — which are also sometimes useful — will never be entirely abolished among men. But they *should* be so, and we all ought to labor to that end. Thus with religion: if it is an illusion, if it represents an inferior state of consciousness, though it might be relatively good, yet I say that it *ought* to disappear; that it is the *duty* of each individual one of us to do his part toward destroying it, whether in himself or in others. Well! regarding the question from this exact and strict point of view, I am one of those who believe, not only that it cannot disappear, but that it ought not to do so; that it is an essential element of humanity.

But what is religion? Of what does this essential element, which we believe ought to exist under every change of exterior form, consist? Religion is generally confounded with belief in the supernatural; but this is only the form of religion, not its essence. Imagine, on the one hand, a man who believes in the miracles, in revelation, in every thing

in the sense of good or better; which could not be true on the hypothesis of a nature essentially bad, which would will only evil, and would combat the good; nor even on the hypothesis of an indifferent nature, which would forever toss us back and forth from one to the other.

maintained by the Church, but in whose heart there is not a spark of love for God or for mankind. Shall we say that he is religious? Contrast with him the Good Samaritan, or a pious pagan like Epictetus, and shall we not say; There is a religious man! Religion requires that we shall add the spirit to the letter. Now, one who has the spirit without the letter, is more religious than one who has the letter without the spirit. Marcus Aurelius is more religious than Torquemada.

Hence the essence of religion is not the supernatural, a faith in miracles, but it is "the love of God and of man." This is all the law, according to Jesus Christ; and why should we be more exacting than he? If there is no morality without religion, there is also no religion without morality; and true piety cannot exist without charity. To love God without loving men is only a more exalted form of egotism. Thus the love of our neighbor forms part of the religious sentiment, but it is not the whole of it. There still remains the love of God; and what should we understand by this?

The love of God is a complex sentiment which requires analysis. It includes first a metaphysical, and second a moral, element.

1. Metaphysically, the love of God is the sentiment of the infinite, the need of attaching one's self to the absolute, the eternal, the immutable, to that which is true in itself — in a word, to the Being. Man, if he considers himself with any seriousness, or even but superficially, finds that he is small, weak, and miserable. "Oh, how utterly nothing we are!" cries Bossuet. *Homo sibi ipsi vilescit*, says St. Bernard. Man feels that his being is fragile, that he holds life by a thread, that he is passing away. The goods of this world are perishable. The fashion of this world passeth away. We know neither what we are, nor whence we come, nor whither we go, nor what sustains us during the short period of our life. We are suspended between heaven and earth — between two infinities. We rest upon shifting sands. All these strong

words from mystical and religious writers express admirably the need of the absolute, the immutable, and the perfect, with which pious souls are particularly exercised, but which all feel to some extent, and satisfy as best they may. All our efforts to attain the absolute in science, in art, and even in politics, are only forms under which this need of the infinite manifests itself. The insatiable pursuit of the gratification of the passions is also, under a vain show, the same want. We soon tire of the goods which we have thus obtained, and we seek for others. *Quæcumque adfuerint*, says St. Bernard, *semper eris inquietus*. In the same way Plato says that we, like Homer's old men, pursue the shadow of Helen, instead of her true self.

All great metaphysicians have called this sentiment of the eternal and the infinite the ultimate basis of morality. Plato, Plotinus, Malebranche, and Spinoza command us to seek eternal goods rather than those that are perishable. This sentiment, becoming self-conscious, and seeking for that which is good in itself, instead of that which is but the shadow of good, is the most profound and essential element of the religious sentiment. It cannot be said that every man experiences it, nor that all feel it to the same extent. But when we interrogate great religious souls, like St. Bernard or Gerson, we see that the ultimate and noblest form of the religious spirit is this need of union with the infinite — of communication with God. This is the sentiment which gives grandeur and beauty to mysticism. To this same sentiment Christianity affords the highest and purest satisfaction in the sublime sacrament of the Eucharist.

2. This is the metaphysical element of religion: next comes the moral element. God appears to the human soul, not only as infinite, immense, inexhaustible, and eternal. It goes farther, and, with respectful boldness, calls him *the Father*. Man is not only weak and imperfect. He is also sinful and suffering: evil is his natural condition. The fragility of our being, and its limitations, are an evil in them-

selves; but these are the least of all; they are what the schools call metaphysical evil. But humanity suffers a double evil, much more real, much more poignant — grief and sin. Against physical ill — pain — it has but the feeble resource of prudence: against moral evil it has but one weapon, weak indeed — free will. Pelagianism represents free will as all-powerful. It makes us seem the masters of the universe. But experience proves, on the contrary, how weak we are, how many times liberty yields; and Kant himself, in spite of his stoicism, inquires whether a single virtuous act was ever performed in this world. How vain is such a virtue! To sum up: life, notwithstanding its grand aspects, and some sublime and exquisite joys, life is evil. Every thing ends badly; and death, which terminates all woes, is itself the greatest of all. The human soul, says Plato, "raises its eyes toward heaven, like a bird." It calls for a remedy, for aid, for deliverance. *Libera nos a malo* is the cry of every religion. God is the deliverer and the consoler. We love good, and we do evil: we long impatiently for happiness, and we encounter only misery. This is the contradiction which Pascal describes with such burning eloquence. This contradiction must be removed. A benevolent being must come to redeem poor humanity from grief and sin.

Many persons regard belief in a future life, or the immortality of the soul, as being the essence of religion. Without the hope of gaining paradise, who would think of God? But this is to reverse the terms. Paradise itself is nothing to the true believer: God is every thing. If the future life is a necessary consequence of the divine justice and goodness, it will come, never doubt it. If not, we have nothing to ask: that does not concern us. What does concern us is, to know what we ought to do here below, and to have the strength to do it. *Vita est meditatio vitæ, non mortis*, said Spinoza. But to live, and live well, one must believe in life, believe in its healthy and holy significance, believe that it is

not a game, nor a mystification, but that it has been given us by the principle of good, and for the success of good.

The essence of religion is, then, belief in the goodness of God. A critical writer of Germany, Feuerbach, has made the profound remark, that religion consists in making human attributes divine. Thus, according to him; "God is good," signifies; "Goodness is divine." "God is just," signifies; "Justice is divine." The boldness of Christianity, its profound, pathetic beauty, its great moral efficacy, lie in the fact that it has deified our miseries, and that instead of saying, "Pain is divine, death is divine;" it has said, "God has suffered, God has died." In a word, according to the same author, God "is the human heart deified." Nothing could be more true and beautiful, but in a different sense from that intended by the author. If God himself were not all goodness, the human heart would contain something divine, and God himself would not be divine at all! The heart feels that it is more than all things else; but, to believe in itself, it must believe that it comes from above, and is derived from a source that is purer than itself.

Here we see the connecting link between religion and morality. Perhaps religion may not be the theoretical basis of morality, but it is the foundation of its efficacy. Kant has shown this clearly, in making the existence of God the postulate of morality. The moral law, in fact, implies the supposition that the world can conform to this law. But how can this be believed possible, if this world is the effect of a blind and indifferent necessity? "Since it is our duty," he says, "to strive for the realization of the sovereign good, it is not only our right, but it is a necessity arising from the duty, that we should believe in the possibility of this sovereign good, which is only possible on condition of God's existence."[1] "Suppose," he says in another place,[2] "an honest man, like Spinoza for example, should be firmly con-

[1] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, I., ii., chap. ii., § v.

[2] Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*.

vinced that there is no God, and that there is no future life. He would disinterestedly accomplish (undoubtedly) all the good which this holy law suggests to his activity. But his efforts are limited; though he may find here and there in nature an accidental concurrence, he can never expect a regular or constant concordance with the end which he feels obliged to pursue. Fraud, violence, and envy, will ceaselessly surround him, though he is honest, peaceable, and kind. The good people whom he encounters will vainly merit happiness: nature, which has no respect for this consideration, exposes them, like every animal on earth, to maladies, to evils, and to premature death, until a vast tomb swallows all in the gulf of the blind matter from which they came forth. Thus this honest man should abandon, as impossible of attainment, the end which the law requires him to seek; or, if he persists in remaining faithful to the interior voice of his moral destiny, he must, from a practical point of view, recognize the existence of a moral cause in this world — that is to say, God." Thus, according to Kant, religion — that is, belief in the existence of God — is required, not as a theoretical foundation for morality, but to render it practically possible. "The honest man may say, 'I *will* that there should be a God.'"[1]

In the same sense I make religion the practical condition of morality. Undoubtedly the exterior success of the law does not seem to be essential to the idea of that law; and, so far as his own happiness is concerned, I grant that the wise man may set all consideration of this aside. But he cannot set aside all consideration for the happiness of others, nor can he, speaking generally, be indifferent to a certain state of perfection possible for human society. For instance, if mankind must always be either apes or tigers, given over to low and ferocious instincts, as some pessimistic or misanthropic philosophers maintain, is it credible, that, when fully persuaded of this sad truth, the morally best endowed of men,

[1] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason.*

and those most deeply convinced of the obligation of obedience to the law of duty, would have the strength necessary to continue the fulfilment of good which could produce only inappreciable and imperceptible results? Belief in virtue is the fundamental condition for becoming, or remaining, a virtuous man. But to believe in virtue is to believe that it can exist in the world, and can do good there; it is to believe that nature ought to be capable of being transformed according to the law of good; finally, it is to believe that the universe is obedient to the principle of good, not to that of evil — to Ormuzd, not to Ahriman. As to an indifferent nature, one that was neither good nor evil, it would leave us equally uncertain as to the possible success of our efforts, equally distrustful of the value of our moral beliefs.

In one word, to conclude, if God were an illusion, why would not virtue be an illusion also? That I may be able to believe in the dignity and excellence of my soul, and of the souls of other men, my brethren, I must believe in a supreme principle of dignity and excellence. From nothing, nothing comes. If there is no being who loves men, and who loves me, why am I obliged to love them? If the world is not good, if it was not made for good, if good is not its origin and its end, what have I to do here below, and what need I care for this ant-hill of which I form a part? Let it get on as well as it can! Why should I take so much trouble for so small a result? Imagine a wise citizen, loving civil and political liberty, and ready to suffer any thing in order to gain it for his country. So long as he believes that this is possible, wisdom as well as virtue will command him to consecrate himself entirely to this work. But let experience demonstrate to him that such an achievement is a chimera; that his fellow-citizens are too cowardly or too vicious to be worthy, or capable, of enjoying the good which he desires to assure to them; suppose that he sees everywhere about him nothing but cupidity, servility, unbridled and abominable passions; finally, let him acquire the convic-

tion that liberty is a delusion among men or at least among such a people — does any one believe that he could, does any one believe even that he should, continue to waste his energies upon an undertaking which can never be successful? Again, I can and I should forget myself, and leave to eternal justice or to divine goodness the care of watching over my destiny; but I cannot forget, I ought not to be indifferent to, the reign of justice in the world. I must be able to say: *Adveniat regnum tuum.* How can I do this, if there is not a Father, who, in intrusting to us the task of bringing about his reign, has rendered it at least possible, when creating the world? And how can I believe, that, out of the great void into which some seek to reduce us all, there can come a reign of holy and just wills, united by the laws of respect and of love? The great Stoic, Kant, has depicted the necessity for this reign of law more strongly than any one else, without borrowing any arguments from theology; but he saw clearly, that this abstract and ideal order would remain a mere conception if there were not added to it what he rightly calls "practical faith, moral faith," in the existence of God. This moral faith is all that I have attempted here to defend. The theoretical demonstration of the principles of natural theology lies outside of my chosen field.

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